

One day, as she ferried pilgrims across the Jumna, there entered her boat alone the high and pious Brahman Parashara, who was moved by the maiden's great beauty. He desired that she should become the mother of his son, and promised that ever afterwards an alluring perfume would emanate from her body. He then caused a cloud to fall upon the boat, and it vanished from sight.

When the fisher girl became the mother of a son, he grew suddenly before her eyes, and in a brief space was a man. His name was Vyasa¹; he bade his mother farewell, and hastened to the depths of a forest to spend his days in holy meditation. Ere he departed he said unto Satyavati: "If ever thou hast need of me, think of me, and I shall come to thine aid."

When this wonder had been accomplished, Satyavati became a virgin again through the power of the great sage Parashara, and a delicious odour lingered about her ever afterwards.

On this maiden King Shantanu gazed with love. Then he sought the fisherman, and said he desired the maiden to be his bride. But the man refused to give his daughter to the king in marriage until he promised that her son should be chosen as heir to the throne. Shantanu could not consent to disinherit Satanava, son of Ganga, and went away with a heavy heart.

Greatly the king sorrowed in his heart because of his love for the dark-eyed maiden, and at length Satanava was given his secret. Then that noble son of Ganga went to search for the beautiful daughter of the fisherman, and he found her. The fisherman said unto him, when he had made known his mission: "If Satyavati bears sons, they will not inherit the kingdom, for the king hath already a son, and he will succeed him."

Satanava thereupon made a vow renouncing his claim to the throne, and said: "If thou wilt give thy daughter unto my sire to be his queen, I, who am his heir, will never accept the throne, nor marry a wife, or be the father of children. If, then, Satyavati will become the mother of a son, he will surely be chosen rajah." When he had spoken thus, the gods and Apsaras, the mist fairies, caused flowers to fall out of heaven upon the prince's head, and a voice came down the wind, saying: "*This one is Bhishma.*"

So from that day the son of Ganga was called Bhishma, which signifies the "Terrible", for the vow that he had taken was terrible indeed.

Then was Satyavati given in marriage to the king, and she bore him two sons, who were named Chitrangada and Vichitra-virya.¹

In time Santanu sank under the burden of his years, and his soul departed from his body. Unto Bhishma was left the care of the queen-mother, Satyavati, and the two princes.

When the days of mourning went past, Bhishma renounced the throne in accordance with his vow, and Chitrangada was proclaimed king. This youth was a haughty ruler, and his reign was brief. He waged war against the Gandhari of the hills² for three years, and was slain in battle by their rajah. Then Bhishma placed Vichitra-virya on the throne, and, as he was but a boy, Bhishma ruled as regent for some years.

At length the time came for the young king to marry, and Bhishma set out to find wives for him. It chanced

¹ From *chit-ran'gada* ("ch" as in "change") and *vi-cheet'ra-veer-ya*.

² An Aryan tribe in the north-west of India. Part of their territory was included in the Persian empire. Keith identifies them with the Gandarians who accompanied Xerxes in his campaign against the Greeks.

that the King of Kasi (Benares) had three fair daughters whose swayamvara¹ was being proclaimed. When Bhishma was told of this he at once entered his chariot and drove from Hastinapur² to Kasi to discover if the girls were worthy of the monarch of Bharatavarsha. He found that they had great beauty, and he was well pleased thereat. The great city was thronged with rajahs who had gathered from far and near to woo the maidens, but Bhishma would not tarry until the day of the swayamvara. He immediately seized the king's fair daughters and placed them in his chariot. Then he challenged the assembled rajahs and sons of rajahs in a voice like thunder, saying :

"The sages have decreed that a king may give his daughter with many gifts unto one he has invited when she hath chosen him. Others may barter their daughters for two kine, and some may give them in exchange for gold. But maidens may also be taken captive. They may be married by consent, or forced to consent, or be obtained by sanction of their sires. Some are given wives as reward for performing sacrifices, a form approved by the sages. Kings ever favour the swayamvara, and obtain wives according to its rules. But learned men have declared that the wife who is to be most highly esteemed is she who is taken captive after battle with the royal guests who attend a swayamvara. Hear and know, then, ye mighty rajahs, I will carry off these fair daughters of the king of Kasi, and I challenge all who are here to overcome me or else be overcome themselves by me in battle."

The royal guests who were there accepted the chal-

¹ A festival at which a princess selected a husband from among the kings and warriors assembled together.

² A drive of about 500 miles. Indian poets, however, have never troubled about geographical difficulties.

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lenge, and Bhishma fought against them with great fury. Bows were bent and ten thousand arrows were discharged against him, but he broke their flight with innumerable darts from his own mighty bow. Strong and brave was he indeed; there was none who could overcome him; he fought and conquered all, until not a rajah was left to contend against him.¹

Thus did Bhishma, the terrible son of the ocean-going Ganga, take captive after battle the three fair daughters of the King of Kasi; and he drove away with them in his chariot towards Hastinapur.²

When he reached the royal palace he presented the maidens unto Queen Satyawati, who was well pleased, and at once gave many costly gifts to Bhishma. She decided that the captives should become the wives of her son, King Vichitra-virya.

Ere the wedding ceremony was held, the eldest maiden, whose name was Amba, pleaded with the queen to be set free, saying:

"I have been betrothed already by my sire unto the Rajah of Sanva. Oh, send me unto him now, for I cannot marry a second time."

Her prayer was granted, and Bhishma sent her with an escort unto the Rajah of Sanva. Then the fair Amba related unto him how she had been taken captive; but the rajah exclaimed, with anger: "Thou hast already dwelt in the house of a strange man, and I cannot take thee for my wife."

The maiden wept bitterly, and she knelt before the monarch and said: "No man hath wronged me, O

¹ The Kasi tribe was Aryan but was despised by the eastern Aryans because its beliefs were not according to the standards imposed by the Brahmins. Conflicts were frequent.

² From Sanskrit's *spoor*. Marriage by capture was called a *Riksha* marriage, and was much loved by Brahmins.

CHAPTER X

Royal Rivals: the Pandavas and Kauravas¹

King Pandu's Two Wives—Pritha and the Sun God—Birth of Karna—The Indian Moses—Babe rescued from Floating Cradle—Pandu slays Brahman in Deer Guise—His Doom pronounced—Queen burned on King's Pyre—Blind Brother becomes Rajah—The Rival Princes—Attempt to kill Bhima—His Visit to the Underworld—The Draught of Strength—Drona, Preceptor of Princes—His Royal Rival Draupada—Training of Young Warriors—The Faithful Bhil Prince—His Sacrifice

King Pandu became a mighty monarch, and was renowned as a warrior and a just ruler of his kingdom. He married two wives: Pritha, who was chief rani, and Madri², whom he loved best.

Now Pritha was of celestial origin, for her mother was a nymph; her father was a holy Brahman, and her brother, Vasudeva, was the father of Krishna.³ When but a babe she had been adopted by the Rajah of Shurasena, whose kingdom was among the Vindhya mountains. She was of pious heart, and ever showed reverence towards holy men. Once there came to the palace the great Rishi Durvasas, and she ministered unto him faithfully by serving food at any hour he desired, and by kindling the sacred fire in the sacrificial chamber. After his stay, which was in length a full year, Durvasas, in reward for her services, imparted to Pritha a powerful charm⁴, by

¹ *Pron. pan'davas and kow'ravas.*

² *Pron. pee'e'tha and ma-dree'.*

³ Krishna of the Yadavas was descended from the moon through Yadu; Bharata was descended through Puru, Yadu's brother.

⁴ A *mantra*.

drew nigh in the attire of a rajah, wearing the celestial ear-rings. In secret she became in time the mother of his son, Karna, who was equipped at birth with celestial ear-rings and an invulnerable coat of mail, which had power to grow as the wearer increased in stature. The child had the eyes of a lion and the shoulders of a bull.

In her maidenly shame *Pritha* resolved to conceal her new-born babe. So she wrapped him in soft sheets and laying under his head a costly pillow, placed him in a basket of wicker-work which she had smeared over with wax. Then, weepily bitterly, she set the basket afloat on the river, saying: "O my babe, be thou protected by all who are on land, and in the water, and in the sky, and in the celestial regions! May all who see thee love thee. May *Varuna*, god of the waters, shield thee from harm. May thy father, the sun, give thee warmth! . . . I shall know thee in days to come, wherever thou mayst be, by thy coat of golden mail. . . . She who will find thee and adopt thee will be surely blessed. . . . O my son, she who will cherish thee will behold thee in youthful prime like to a maned lion in Himalayan forests."

The basket drifted down the River *Aswa* until it was no longer seen by that lotus-eyed damsel, and at length it reached the *Jumna*; the *Jumna* gave it to the *Ganges*, and by that great and holy river it was borne unto the country of *Anga*. . . . The child, lying in soft slumber, was kept alive by reason of the virtues possessed by the celestial armour and the ear-rings.

Now there was a woman of *Anga* who was named *Radha*, and she had peerless beauty. Her husband was *Shatananda*, the charioteer. Both husband and wife had

long sorrowed greatly because that they could not gain a son. One day, however, their wish was gratified. It chanced that Radha went down to the river bank, and she beheld the basket drifting on the waves. She caused it to be brought ashore; and when it was uncovered, she gazed with wonder upon a sleeping babe who was as fair as the morning sun. Her heart was immediately filled with great gladness, and she cried out: "The gods have heard me at length, and they have sent unto me a son." She adopted the babe and cherished him. And the years went past, and Karna grew up and became a powerful youth and a mighty bowman.

Pritha, who was comely to behold, chose King Pandu for her swayamvara. Trembling with love, she placed the flower garland upon his shoulders.

Madri came from the country of Madra¹, and was black-eyed and dusky-complexioned. She had been purchased by Bhishma for the king with much gold, many jewels and elephants and horses, as was the marriage custom among her people.

The glories of King Bharata's reign were revived by Pandu, who achieved great conquests and extended his territory. He loved well to go a-hunting, and at length he retired to the Himalaya mountains with his two wives to pursue and slay deer. There, as fate had decreed, he met with dire misfortune. One day he shot arrows at two deer which he beheld sporting together; but they were, as he discovered to his sorrow, a holy Brahman and his wife in animal guise. The sage was wounded mortally, and ere he died he assumed his wonted form, and foretold that Pandu, whom he cursed, would die in the arms of one of his wives.

The king was stricken with fear; he immediately took

¹ Identified with Cashmere by some of the authorities.

virtue of which she could compel the love of a celestial being. One day she had a vision of Surya, god of the sun; she muttered the charm, and received him when he drew nigh in the attire of a rajah, wearing the celestial ear-rings. In secret she became in time the mother of his son, Karna, who was equipped at birth with celestial ear-rings and an invulnerable coat of mail, which had power to grow as the wearer increased in stature. The child had the eyes of a lion and the shoulders of a bull.

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So they held dispute, nor could agree; but the Brahmans, who heard them, said that Madri must be burned with King Pandu, having been his favourite wife. And so it came to pass that Madri laid herself on the pyre, and she passed in flames with her beloved lord, that bull among men.

Meanwhile King Pandu's blind brother, Dhritarashtra, had ascended the throne to reign over the kingdom of Bharatavarsha, with Bhishma as his regent, until the elder of the young princes should come of age.

Dhritarashtra had taken for wife fair Gāndhārī, daughter of the Rajah of Gāndhāra. When she was betrothed she went unto the king with eyes blindfolded, and ever afterwards she so appeared in his presence. She became the mother of a hundred sons, the eldest of whom was Duryodhana. These were the princes who were named the Kauravas, after the country of Kuru-jangala.¹

The widowed Pritha returned to Hastinapur with her three sons and the two sons of Madri also. When she told unto Dhritarashtra that Pandu his brother had died, he wept and mourned greatly; then he bathed in holy waters and poured forth the funeral oblation. The blind king gave his protection to the five princes who were Pandu's heirs.

So the Pandavas and Kauravas were reared together in the royal palace at Hastinapur. Nor was favour shown to one cousin more than another. The young princes were trained to throw the stone and to cast the noose, and they engaged lustily in wrestling bouts and practised

¹ The upper part of the Punjab, which was ruled over ultimately by the sons of Duryodhana. Another explanation is that the Kauravas, or Kuru brothers, were called after their eponymous ancestor, King Kuru. The Kuru people are believed to be a group of the tribes mentioned in the *Rigveda*. The Kurus may have been late-comers who formed a military aristocracy, and displaced earlier settlers who opposed their rule.

vows of celibacy, and gave all his possessions to Brahma; then he went away to live in a solitary place with his wives.

Some have told that Pandu never had children of his own, and that the gods were the fathers of his wife's great sons. Pritha was mother of Yudhishtira¹, son of Dharma, god of justice, and of Bhima, son of Vayu, the wind god, and also of Arjuna², son of mighty Indra, monarch of heaven. Madri received from Pritha the charm which Durvasas had given her, and she became the mother of Nakula and Sahadeva, whose sires were the twin Aswins, sons of Surya, the sun god. These five princes were known as the Pandava brothers.

King Pandu was followed by his doom. One day, as it chanced, he met with Madri, his favourite wife; they wandered together in a forest, and when he clasped her in his arms he immediately fell dead as the Brahman had foretold.

His sons, the Pandava brothers, built his funeral pyre, so that his soul might pass to heaven. Both Pritha and Madri desired to be burned with him, and they debated together which of them should follow her lord to the region of the dead.

Said Pritha: "I must go hence with my lord. I was his first wife and chief rani. O Madri, yield me his body and rear our children together. O let me achieve what must be achieved."

Madri said: "Speak not so, for I should be the chosen one. I was King Pandu's favourite wife, and he died because that he loved me. O sister, if I survived thee I should not be able to rear our children as thou canst rear them. Do not refuse thy sanction to this which is dear unto my heart."

¹ From *prandish-thira* (1) rounded after *th*.

² From *arjoo'sa*.

was loved by Vasuki, who, for Aryaka's sake, offered great gifts to fearless Bhima. But Aryaka chose rather that the lad should be given a draught of strength which contained the virtues of a thousand Nagas. By the king of serpents was this great boon granted, and Bhima was permitted to drain the bowl eight times. He immediately fell into a deep slumber, which continued for the space of eight days. Then he awoke, and the Nagas feasted him ere he returned again unto his mother and his brethren, who were mourning for him the while. Thus it fell that Bhima triumphed over Duryodhana, for ever afterwards he possessed the strength of a mighty giant. He related unto his brothers all that had befallen him, but they counselled him not to reveal his secret unto the Kauravas, his cousins.

About this time the prudent Bhishma deemed that the young men should be trained to bear arms; so he searched far and wide for a preceptor who was at once a warrior and a scholar, a pious and lofty-minded man, and a lover of truth. Such was Drona, the brave and god-adoring son of Bharadwaja. He was well pleased to have care of the princes, and to give them instruction worthy of their rank and martial origin.

Drona had no mother: his miraculous birth was accomplished by a beautiful nymph, and his sire was Bharadwaja, a most pious Brahman. Of similar origin was Drupada¹, son of a rajah named Prishata². Drona and Drupada were reared together like brothers by the wise Bharadwaja, and it was the hope of both sires that their sons would repeat their own lifelong friendship. But when, after happy youth, they grew into manhood, fate parted them. The rajah retired from the throne, and

¹ *From droo'pa-da.*

² *From prish'ata.*

boxing. As they grew up they shared work with the king's men; they marked the young calves, and every three years they counted and branded the cattle. Yet, despite all that could be done, the two families lived at enmity. Of all the young men Bhima¹, of the Pandavas², was the most powerful, and Duryodhana³, the leader of the Kauravas, was jealous of him. Bhima was ever the victor in sports and contests. The Kauravas could ill endure his triumphs, and at length they plotted among themselves to accomplish his death.

It chanced that the young men had gone to dwell in a royal palace on the banks of the Ganges. One day, when they feasted together in the manner of warriors, Duryodhana put poison in the food of Bhima, who soon afterwards fell into a deep swoon and seemed to be dead. Then Duryodhana bound him hand and foot and cast him into the Ganges; his body was swallowed by the waters.

But it was not fated that Bhima should thus perish. As his body sank down, the fierce snakes, which are called Nagas, attacked him; but their poison counteracted the poison he had already swallowed, so that he regained consciousness. Then, bursting his bonds, he scattered the reptiles before him, and they fled in terror.

Bhima found that he had sunk down to the city of serpents, which is in the underworld. Vasuki, king of the Nagas, having heard of his prowess, hastened towards the young warrior, whom he desired greatly to behold.

Bhima was welcomed by Aryaka, the great grandsire of Pritha, who was a dweller in the underworld. He

¹ *From Bhre'ma.* ² *The Afali Jābram favours the Pandavas from the outset.*

³ *From door-yu'dhar-a.*

Brahman respect one who is ignorant of the Vedas? Can a warrior do other than despise one who cannot go forth to battle in his rumbling chariot? Say, can a monarch condescend to one who is far beneath him? . . . Begone, then, thou dreamer! Forget the days and the thoughts of the past. . . . I know thee not. . . ."

Drona heard the harsh words of his old friend with mute amaze. For a moment he paused. Then abruptly he turned away, nor spake he in reply. His heart burned with indignation as he hastened out of the city.

In time he reached the city of Hastinapur, and Bhishma bade him welcome. When Drona undertook the training of the princes he said: "I will do as is thy desire, O Bhishma, but on condition that when the young men are become complete warriors they will help me to fight against mine enemy, Drupada, the Rajah of Panchala."

Bhishma gave willing consent to this condition. Thereafter Drona abode with his wife in the royal palace, and his son Ashwatthama was trained with the Pandavas and Kauravas. He became the family priest as well as the instructor of the princes. And ere long the young men were accomplished warriors, and deeply learned in wisdom and in goodness.

Drona took most delight in the Pandavas. Yudhishthira was trained as a spearman, but he was more renowned as a scholar than for feats of arms. Arjuna surpassed all others in warrior skill; he was of noble bearing, and none like him could ride the steed, guide the elephant, or drive the rattling chariot, nor could any other prince withstand his battle charge or oppose him in single combat. He was unequalled with javelin or dart, with battleaxe or mace, and he became the most famous archer of his

Drupada ruled the kingdom of Panchala¹. Bharadwaja died soon afterwards, and Drona married a wife named Kripa, who became the mother of his son Ashwatthama². The child was so named because at birth he uttered a cry like to the neighing of a horse. Drona devoted himself to rearing his son, while he accumulated the wisdom of the sages and performed sacred rites with pious mind like to his holy sire.

When the sage Jamadagni, son of Bhrigu, closed his career, he bestowed his great wealth on the sons of Brahmans. Drona received heavenly weapons and power to wield them. Then he bethought him to visit Drupada, the friend of his youth, and share his inheritance with him.³

Drona stood before the rajah and exclaimed: "Behold thy friend."

But Drupada frowned; his eyes reddened with anger, and for a while he sat in silence. At length he spoke haughtily and said:

"Brahman, it is nor wise nor fitting that thou shouldst call me friend. What friendship can there be between a luckless beggar and a mighty rajah? . . . I grant that in youth such a bond united us, one to another, but it has wasted away with the years. Do not think that the friendship of youth endures for ever in human hearts; it is weakened by time, and pride plucks it from one's bosom. Friendship can exist only between equals as we two once were, but no longer chance to be. Hear and know! Rich and poor, wise and ignorant, warriors and cowards, can never be friends; it is for those who are of equal station to exercise mutual esteem. . . . Say, can a

¹ *From pan-chal'a.*

² *From ash-wat-tha'ma. Ashwa, a horse; istama, sound or strength.*

³ Apparently Drona had a claim to part of the kingdom ruled over by Drupada.

skilled archer, and found him busy with his bow. They spoke, saying: "Who art thou?" And the Bhil made answer: "I am a pupil of Drona."

When Drona was brought to the place, the young man kissed his feet.

Said the wise preceptor: "If thou art my pupil, I must receive my reward."

The young man made answer: "Command me, and I will give thee whatsoever thou dost desire."

Said Drona: "I should like to have the thumb of thy right hand."

The faithful prince of the Bhils did not hesitate to obey his preceptor; with a cheerful face he severed his thumb from his right hand and gave it to Drona.

After his wound had healed, the young man began to draw his bow with his middle fingers, but found that he had lost his surpassing skill, whereat Arjuna was made happy.

All the other Bhil warriors who trained in archery followed the prince's example and drew the bow with their middle fingers, and this custom prevailed ever afterwards amongst the tribe.

Now when all the Hastinapur princes had become expert warriors, Drona addressed the blind king, as he sat among his counsellors, and said: "O mighty rajah, thy sons and the sons of thy brother Pandu have now attained surpassing skill in arms, and they are fit to enter the battlefield."

Said the king, who was well pleased: "So thy task is finished, O noble son of Bharadwaja? Let now a place be made ready, in accordance with thy desire, so that the princes may display their martial skill in the presence of their peers and the common people."

Then Drona, accompanied by Vidura, the king's

day. Strong Bhima learned to wield the club, Nakula acquired the secret of taming steeds, and Sahadeva became a mighty swordsman, and acquired great knowledge of astronomy.

Drona trained the Kauravas with diligence also, as well as his own son, who was wise and brave; but among all his pupils he loved Arjuna best, for he was the most modest and the most perfect, the most fearless, and yet the most obedient to his preceptor.

Duryodhana of the Kauravas was jealous of all the Pandavas, and especially of Arjuna.

The fame of Drona as a preceptor was spread far and wide, and the sons of many rajahs and warriors hastened to Hastinapur to be instructed by him. All were welcomed save one, and he was the son of the rajah of the robber Bhils. This young man pleaded that he might be trained as an archer, but without avail. Drona said: "Are not the Bhils highwaymen and cattle-lifters? It would be a sin, indeed, to impart unto one of them great knowledge in the use of weapons."

When he heard these words, the rajah's son was stricken with grief, and he turned homeward. But he resolved to become an accomplished warrior. So he fashioned a clay image of Drona and worshipped it, and wielded the bow before it until his fame as an archer was noised abroad.

One day Drona went forth with the princes to hunt in the Bhil kingdom. Their dog ran through the woods, and it beheld the dark son of the rajah of the Bhils and barked at him. Desiring to display his skill, the young man shot seven arrows into the dog's mouth ere it could be closed, and, moaning and bleeding, the animal returned thus to the princes.

Wondering greatly, the princes searched for the greatly-

CHAPTER XI

The Tournament

A Brilliant Assembly—Princes display Feats of Arms—Mimic Warfare—Duryodhana and Bhima—A Fierce Struggle—Arjuna's Wonderful Skill—Despondency of Kauravas—The Coming of Karna—He proves Himself equal to Arjuna—Challenge to Single Combat—The Gods intervene—Queen Pritha's Emotion—Karna taunted with Low Birth—Kauravas make him a King—Joy of his Foster Father—Bitter and Angry Rivals

On the day of the great tournament, vast multitudes of people from all parts of the kingdom assembled round the barriers on the wide plain. A scene of great splendour was unfolded to their eyes. At dawn many flags and garlands of flowers had been distributed round the enclosure; they adorned the stately royal pavilion, which was a gleam with gold and jewels and hung with trophies of war; they fluttered above the side galleries for the lords and the ladies, and even among the clustering trees. White tents for the warriors occupied a broad green space. A great altar had been erected by Drona beside a cool, transparent stream, on which to offer up sacrifices to the gods.

From early morn the murmurous throng awaited the coming of king and counsellors, and royal ladies, and especially the mighty princes who were to display their feats of arms and engage in mimic warfare. The bright sun shone in beauty on that festal day.

The clarion notes of the instruments of war proclaimed the coming of the king. Then entered the royal pro-

brother, made choice of a wide and level plain on which the Pandavas and Kauravas might perform their mighty feats.

So be it next told of the great tournament on the plain, and of the coming of illustrious Karna.

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cession, and blind Dhritarashtra was led towards his throne in the gleaming pavilion. With him came the fair queen Gandhari, mother of the Kauravas, and stately Pritha, widow of King Pandu, the mother of the Pandavas. There followed in their train many high-born dames and numerous sweet maidens renowned for their beauty. When all these ladies, attired in many-coloured robes and glittering with jewels and bright flowers, were mounting the decorated galleries, they seemed like to goddesses and heavenly nymphs ascending to the golden summit of the mountain of Meru. . . . The trumpets were sounding loud, and the clamour which arose from the surging multitude of people of every caste and every age and every tribe was like the voice of heaving ocean in sublime tempest.

Next came venerable and white-haired Drona, robed in white, with white sacrificial cord; his sandals were white, and the garlands he wore were white also. His valiant son, Aswatthama, followed him as the red planet Mars follows the white moon in cloudless heaven. The saintly preceptor advanced to the altar where the priestly choir gathered, and offered up sacrifices to the gods and chanted holy texts.

Then heralds sounded their trumpets as the youthful princes entered in bright array, bejewelled and lightly girded for exercise, their left arms bound with leather. They were wearing breastplates; their quivers were slung from their shoulders, and they carried stately bows and gleaming swords. The princes filed in according to their years, and Yudhishtira came first of all. Each saluted Drona in turn and awaited his commands.

One by one the youthful warriors displayed their skill at arms, while the vast crowd shouted their plaudits. The regent Bhishma, sitting on the right side of the throne,

looked down with delight, and Vidura, sitting on the left side, informed the sightless king of all that took place.

The princes shot arrows at targets, first on foot and then mounted on rapid steeds,¹ displaying great skill; they also rode on elephants and in chariots, and their arrows ever flew with unerring aim.

Next they engaged in mimic warfare, charging with chariots and on elephants: swords clamoured on shields, ponderous maces were wielded, and falchions shimmered like to the flashes of lightning. The movements of the princes, mounted and on foot, were rapid and graceful; they were fearless in action and firm-footed, and greatly skilled in thrust and parry.

But ere long the conflict was waged with more than mimic fury. Proud Duryodhana and powerful Bhima had sought one another and were drawn apart from their peers. They towered on the plain with uplifted maces, and they seemed like two rival elephants about to fight for a mate. Then they charged with whirling weapons, and the combat was terrible to behold.

Vidura pictured the conflict to blind Dhritarashtra, as did Pritha also to the blindfolded Queen Gandhari. Round the barriers the multitudes swayed and clamoured, some favouring Duryodhana and others mighty Bhima.

The princes fought on, and their fury increased until at length it seemed that one or the other would be slain. But while yet the issue hung doubtful, Drona, whose brow was troubled, marked with concern the menacing crowd, which was suspended with hope and fear, and seemed like an ocean shaken by fitful gusts of changing wind. Then he interposed, bidding his son to separate the angry combatants so that the turmoil might have end.

¹ Like the Parthians, the ancient Hindus were expert archers on horseback.

The princes heard and obeyed, and they retired slowly like ocean billows, tempest-swollen, falling apart.

To allay excitement, trumpet and drum were sounded aloud. Then white-haired Drona stepped forward, and in a voice like thunder summoned brave Arjuna to come forth.

First of all the valiant hero performed a sacred rite. Thereafter he came before the multitude in all his splendour, clad in golden armour, like to a glorious evening cloud. Modestly he strode, while trumpets blared and the drums bellowed, and he seemed a very god. He was girdled with jewels, and he carried a mighty bow. As the people applauded and shouted his praises, Pritha, his mother, looked down, and tears dropped from her eyes. The blind king spake to Vidura, saying: "Why are the multitudes shouting now like to the tumultuous sea?"

Said Vidura: "The valiant son of Pritha hath come forth in golden armour, and the people hail him with joy."

The blind monarch said: "I am well pleased. The sons of Pritha sanctify the kingdom like to sacrificial fires."

Silence fell upon the people, and Drona bade his favourite pupil to display his skill. Arjuna performed wonders with magic arms; he created fire by the *Agneya* weapon, water by the *Varuna* weapon, wind by the *Vayatyā* weapon, clouds by the *Paryānya* weapon, land by the *Bhannma* weapon, and he caused mountains to appear by the *Parvārya* weapon. Then by the *Antardhyana* weapon he caused all these to vanish.¹

Arjuna then set up for his target an iron image of

¹ This is a notable example of the characteristic exaggerations of late Brahmanical literature. Other exaggerations are of milder form.

a great boar, and at one bending of the bow he shot five arrows into its gaping jaws. Wondrous was his skill. Next he suspended a cow horn, which swayed constantly in the wind, and discharged into its hollow with unerring aim twenty rapid arrows. Heaven and earth resounded with the plaudits of the people when he leapt into his chariot and discharged clouds of arrows as he was driven speedily round the grounds. Having thus displayed his accomplishments as an archer, he drew his sword, which he wielded so rapidly round and about that the people thought they beheld lightning and heard thunder. Ere he left the field he cast the noose with exceeding great skill, capturing horses and cows and scampering deer at a single throw. Then Drona embraced him, and the people shouted his praises.

Great was the joy of the Pandavas as they rested around Drona like to the stars that gather about the white moon in heaven. The Kauravas were grouped around Aswatthama as the gods gather beside Indra when the giant Daityas threaten to assail high heaven. Duryodhana's heart burned with jealous anger because of the triumph achieved by Arjuna.

Evening came on, and it seemed that the tournament was ended; the crowds began to melt away. Then, of a sudden, a mighty tumult of plaudits broke forth, and the loud din of weapons and clank of armour was heard all over the place. Every eye immediately turned towards the gate, and the warriors and the people beheld approaching an unknown warrior, who shook his weapons so that they rattled loudly.

So came mighty Karna, son of Surya, the sun god, and of Pritha, the mother of the three Pandavas—Arjuna, Bhima, and wise Yudhishtira. He was comely as a shining god, clad in golden armour, and wearing celestial

ear-rings. In his right hand he carried a great many-coloured bow; his gleaming falchion was on his thigh. Tall as a cliff he strode forward; he was an elephant in his fury, a lion in his wrath; stately as a palm tree was that tamer of foemen, so fearless and so proud, so dauntless and so self-possessed.

He paused in the centre of the plain and surveyed the people with pride. Stiffly he paid homage to Drona and Kripa. Then he, the eldest son of Pritha, spake to Pritha's youngest son, Arjuna, the brothers being unknown one to another, and he said: "Whatever feats thou hast performed this day with vain boast, Arjuna, these will I accomplish and surpass, if Drona will permit me."

His voice was like to thunder in heaven, and the multitude of people sprang up and uttered cries of wonder. Duryodhana and the other sons of Kuru heard the challenge with glad hearts, but Arjuna remained silent, while his eyes flashed fire.

Then Drona gave the warrior permission to display his skill. Karna was well pleased, and he performed every feat which had given Arjuna fame on that great day.

Duryodhana proclaimed his joy with beaming countenance, and he embraced Karna, whom he hailed as "brother", saying: "I bid thee welcome, thou mighty warrior. Thou hast won the honours of the field. Demand from me whatsoever thou dost desire in this kingdom, and it will be given unto thee."

Said Karna: "Thy word is thy bond, O prince. All I seek is to combat against Arjuna, whom I have equalled so far. Fain would I win the victor's renown."

Duryodhana said: "Thou dost ask for a worthy boon indeed. Be our ally, and let the enemy fear thee."

Arjuna was moved to great wrath, and cried out: "Uninvited chief! Boasting thus, thou wouldst fain be regarded as mine equal, but I will so deal with thee that thou wilt die the death of a braggart who cometh here an unbidden guest, speaking boastfully ere thou art spoken to."

Said Karna, answering proudly and calm: "Waste not words, Arjuna, nor taunt me with coming hither uninvited. The field of combat is free to all warriors; they enter by their valour, and do not await until thou dost call them; they win their places by strength and skill, and their warrant is the sword. Wrathful speech is the weapon of a coward. Do not boast of thy pastimes or be vain of thy bloodless feats. Speak with thine arrows, O Arjuna, until, in Drona's presence, mine will cause all men to wonder, flying towards thee."

Drona was stirred to wrath, and spake to Arjuna, saying: "Canst thou hear him boast in this manner? I give thee leave to fight him here and now."

Arjuna at once strode forward, fully armed, and he was supported by Drona and Bhishma. Duryodhana and his band stood by Karna. Then the two warriors prepared for single combat, but not in mimic warfare.

Thick clouds gathered in the sky; lightning flashed and thunder pealed; the mighty Indra guarded his son Arjuna, who stood in shadow. Surya, the sun god, cast a shaft of light athwart the darkening plain, and Karna's golden armour gleamed bright and fair.

The noble dames looked on, and some praised Arjuna and others praised Karna. Pritha, the mother of both heroes, was alone divided in her love. She knew her firstborn by his voice and noble bearing and by his armour, and her heart was torn with grief to behold the two brothers ready to slay each other. A cloud blinded

her eyes, and, uttering a low cry, she swooned where she sat. Vidura sprinkled water on her face, and she was revived. Then she wept bitterly because that she could not reveal the secret of Karna's birth.

Kripa,¹ the foster-brother of Bhishma, performed the duties of herald, and as Arjuna strode forth to combat he proclaimed: "Behold! this is mighty Arjuna, of Bharata's great line, son of Pandu and of Pritha, a prince of valour and worth who will not shrink from battle. Unknown and long-armed chief," he said unto Karna, "declare now thy name and lineage, the royal house thou dost adorn, and the names of thy sire and thy mother. Know thou that by the rules of single combat the sons of kings cannot contend against low-born or nameless rivals."

Karna heard, but was silent. He hung his head like the dew-laden lotus bloom; he could claim nor lineage or high rank, as he believed, for he regarded the charioteer of Anga as his sire.

Duryodhana, perceiving his discomfiture, cried out to Kripa, saying: "Valour is not reckoned by birth but by deeds. Karna hath already shown himself to be the peer of princes. I now proclaim him the Rajah of Anga."

Having spoken thus, the elder of the Kauravas led Karna by the hand and placed him upon a throne, and the red umbrella was held above his head. Brahmans chanted the texts for the ceremony and anointed Karna as a king. Then the fan was waved and the royal umbrella raised on high, while the Kauravas shouted: "The rajah is crowned; blessings on the rajah; honour to the valorous warrior!"

Robed in royal attire, Karna then spake to Duryodhana and said: "With generous heart thou hast conferred upon

¹ Kripa, like Drona, was of miraculous birth. He and his sister were found in a forest, and were adopted by King Shantanu.

me a kingdom. O prince, speak and say what service thou wouldst have me to render unto thee."

Said Duryodhana: "But one boon do I ask of thee, O king. Be my comrade and, O valiant warrior, be my helper also."

Karna said: "As thou desirest, so be it."

Then Duryodhana and Karna embraced one another to confirm their loyal friendship.

Lo! now a charioteer drew nigh; he was a scantily-clad and wearied old man, and he stooped, leaning heavily upon his staff. He was the aged sire of Karna, and rejoiced in his heart to see his son so highly honoured among princes. Karna cast aside his weapons, knelt down, and kissed the old man's feet. The happy sire embraced the crowned head of the warrior and wept tears of love.

The Pandava brothers gazed upon father and son, amused and scornful. . . . Bhima spake to Karna, saying: "So thou, with such a sire, hast presumed to seek combat with a Pandava! . . . Son of a charioteer, what hast thou to do with weapons of war? Better were it that thou shouldst find thee a goad and drive a bullock-cart behind thy sire."

Karna grew pale with wrath; his lips quivered, but he answered not a word. He heaved a deep sigh and looked towards the sun.

Then Duryodhana arose like a proud elephant and spake to Bhima, saying: "Seek not with insults to give sorrow unto a mighty hero. Taunts come ill from thee, thou tiger-like chief. The proudest warrior may contend against the most humble: a hero is known by his deeds. Of Karna's birth we care naught. Hath Drona other than humble lineage? 'Tis said, too, that thou and thy brethren are not sons of Pandu, but of certain amorous

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deities. . . . Look upon Karna, adorned with jewels and in golden armour! Do hands bring forth tigers? . . . Karna was born to be a king; he hath come to rule by reason of his valour and his worth. If any prince or warrior among you will deny my words, hear and know, now, that I will meet him in deadly combat."

The assembled multitude heard these mighty words with joy and shouted loud applause.

But darkness came on, and lamps were lit upon the plain. . . . Drona and the sons of Pandu made offerings at the altar, and the king and his counsellors, the noble dames and the high-born maids, departed in silence to their homes. . . . Then all the people deserted the barriers, some shouting, "Arjuna hath triumphed;" others, "Karna is victor;" and some also, "Duryodhana hath won."

Pritha had rejoiced in her heart to behold her noble son crowned king. . . .

Duryodhana walked by Karna's side and took him away to his own palace, glad of heart, for he no longer feared Arjuna's valour and skill at arms.

Even Yudhishtira doubted Arjuna's worth; he feared that Karna was the greatest hero in the world of men.

CHAPTER XII

First Exile of the Pandavas

Princes' First Campaign—Kauravas driven back—Pandavas achieve Victory—Drupada humbled by Drona—Panchala Kingdom divided—Pandava Prince made "Little Rajah"—Duryodhana's Plot—Pandavas' First Exile—Their New Home—Escape in the Night—Wanderings in the Jungle—Bhima slays a Rakshasa—The Demon Bride—Sojourn in Ekachakra—Story of the Brahman Family—Bhima overcomes the Asura King—Miraculous Birth of Drupada's Children—Swayamvara proclaimed—Pandavas depart to Panchala

THE Pandavas and Kauravas had now become accomplished warriors, and Drona, their preceptor, claimed his reward. So he spoke unto his pupils and said: "Go forth against Drupada, Rajah of Panchala; smite him in battle and bring him to me."

The cousins could not agree to wage war together by reason of their jealousies. So the Kauravas, led by Duryodhana, were first to attack Drupada; they rode in their chariots and invaded the hostile capital, and slaked their thirst for battle. The warriors of Panchala arose to fight; their shouting was like the roaring of lions, and their arrows were showered as thickly as rain dropping from the clouds. The Kauravas were defeated, and they retired in disorder, uttering cries of despair.

The Pandavas then rushed against the enemies of Drona. Arjuna swept forward in his chariot like to the fire which consumeth all things at the end of time, and he destroyed horses and cars and warriors. The battle-roar of Bhima was like to the roar of ocean stricken

by a tempest; wielding his mace, he struck down elephants big as mountains, and many horses and charioteers also, and he covered the ground with rivers of blood; as a herdsman driveth his cattle before him, so did Bhima drive before him with his mace the terror-stricken hosts of Panchala.

Drupada endeavoured to turn the tide of battle; surrounded by his mightiest men, he opposed Arjuna. Then a great uproar arose among the Panchala forces, for as the lion leaps upon the leader of a herd of elephants, so did Arjuna rush against Drupada. A boastful warrior intervened, but the strong Pandava overcame him, and at length, after fierce fighting, Arjuna seized Drupada as Garuda, king of birds,¹ seizeth a mighty snake after disturbing the waters of the ocean.

The remnant of the Panchala host then broke and fled, and the Pandavas began to lay waste the capital. Arjuna, however, cried unto Bhima: "Remember that Drupada is the kinsman of the Kauravas; therefore cease slaying his warriors."²

Drupada was led before Drona, who, remembering the proud words of the fallen rajah, spoke and said: "At last I have conquered thy kingdom, and thy life is in my hands. Is it thy desire now to revive our friendship?"

Drona smiled a little and continued thus: "Brahmans are full of forgiveness; therefore have no fear for thy life, O king. I have not forgotten that we were children together. So once again I ask for thy friendship, and I grant thee, unasked, the half of the kingdom; the other half will be mine, and if it pleaseth thee we will be friends."

¹ Half man and half eagle, and enemy of the serpent race.

² The Kurus and Panchalas were allies.

Said Drupada: "Thou art indeed noble and great. I thank thee, and desire to be thy friend."

So Drona took possession of half of the kingdom. Drupada, who sorrowed greatly, went to rule the southern Panchalas; he was convinced that he could not defeat Drona by Kshatriya power alone, which is inferior to Brahman power, and he resolved to discover means whereby he might obtain a son who could overcome his Brahman enemy.

Thereafterwards the Pandavas waged war against neighbouring kings, and they extended the territory over which the blind maharajah held sway.

The Kauravas were rendered more jealous than ever by the successes achieved by the Pandavas, and also because the people favoured them. Now Duryodhana desired to become heir to the throne, but the elder prince of the conquering Pandavas could not be set aside. In the end Yudhishtira was chosen, although unwillingly, by the blind king, and he became Yuva-rajah, "Little Rajah", supplanting Bhishma, who had been regent during the minority. Yudhishtira, accordingly, ruled over the kingdom, and he was honoured and beloved by the people; for although he was not a mighty warrior like Arjuna, or powerful like to Bhima, he had great wisdom, and he was ever just and merciful, and a lover of truth.¹

Duryodhana remonstrated with his blind father, the maharajah, and he spoke to him, saying: "Why, O my father, hast thou thus favoured the Pandavas and forgotten thine own sons? Thou wert Pandu's elder brother, and should have reigned before him. Now the children of thy younger brother are to succeed thee. The kingdom is thine own by right of birth, and thy sons are thine

¹ The modern-day Hindu regards Yudhishtira as an ideal man.

by a tempest; wielding his elephants big as mountain charioteers also, and he covered of blood; as a herdsman drove so did Bhima drive before his stricken hosts of Panchala.

Drupada endeavoured to be surrounded by his mightiest warriors, but a great uproar arose among them, the lion leaps upon the lion, he did Arjuna rush against him, but he intervened, but the storm at length, after fierce fighting, Garuda, king of birds, disturbing the waters of the

The remnant of the army fled, and the Pandava Arjuna, however, cried, "Drupada is the kinsman slaying his warriors."

Drupada was led by the proud words of the last I have conquered by my hands. Is it true, O king?"

Drona smiled and said, "You are full of forgiveness, O king. I have gathered you together. So

depart unto the city of Varanavatha¹ and dwell there; when they have gone no one will speak to thee regarding this matter."

Dhritarashtra listened to his son and followed his counsel. He commanded Yudhishtira to depart with his brethren to the city of Varanavatha, rich in jewels and gold, to dwell there until he recalled them. Accordingly the Pandava brethren bade farewell to Dhritarashtra and left Hastinapur, taking with them their mother, the widowed queen Pritha, and went towards the city of Varanavatha. The people of Hastinapur mourned for them greatly.

Ere they departed, Vidura spoke to them in secret, bidding them to be aware of the perils of fire. He repeated a verse to Yudhishtira and said: "Put thy trust in the man who will recite these words unto thee; he will be thy deliverer."

Now Duryodhana had plotted with Shakuni, the brother of Queen Gandhari, to accomplish the destruction of his kinsmen. Then their ally, Kanika the Brahman, said in secret to Dhritarashtra: "When thine enemy is in thy power, destroy him by whatever means is at thy disposal, in secret or openly. Show him no mercy, nor give him thy protection. If thy son, or brother, or kinsman, or thy father even, should become thine enemy, do not hesitate to slay if thou wouldst have prosperity. Let him be overcome either by spells, or by curses, or by deception, or by payment of money. Do not forget thine enemy, even although thou mayst disdain him."

The maharajah lent a willing ear thereafter to the counsel of his son, whom, in his secret heart, he favoured most.

¹ Allahabad, then probably a frontier town of the area of Arya control, pronounced Varanavatha.

heirs. Why, then, hast thou lowered us in the eyes of thy subjects?"

Said the blind Dhritarashtra: "Duryodhana, my son, know thou that Pandu, my brother, was the mightiest ruler in the world. Could I, who have ever been blind, have set him aside? His sons have great wisdom and worth, and are loved by the people. How, then, could I pass them over? Yudhishtira hath greater accomplishments for governing than thou dost possess, my son. How could I turn against him and banish him from my council?"

Duryodhana said: "I do not acknowledge Yudhishtira's superiority as a ruler of men. And this I know full well, I could combat against half a score of Yudhishtiras on the field of battle. . . . If, my father, thou wilt set me aside and deny me my right to a share of government in the kingdom, I will take mine own life and thus end my sorrow."

Said Dhritarashtra: "Be patient, O my son, nor give way to thy vexation. If such is thy desire, I will divide the kingdom between thee and Yudhishtira, so that no jealousy may exist between you both."

Duryodhana was well pleased, hearing these words, and he said: "I agree, O my father, and will accept thine offer. Let the Pandavas take their own land and rule over it, and I and my brethren will remain at Hastinapur with thee. If the Kauravas and Pandavas continue to dwell here together, there will be conflicts and much shedding of blood."

Said Dhritarashtra: "Neither Bhishma, the head of our family, nor Vidura, my brother, nor Drona, thyceptor, will consent to the Pandavas being sent

Duryodhana made answer: "Consult them, are beneath thee, my sire. Command the "

A great windstorm had arisen, and the night was dark. So Bhima deemed that the time had come to accomplish his purpose. He went outside and secured the doors of the dwelling of Purochana, which stood beside that of the Pandavas; then he set it on fire. Soon the flames spread towards the new mansion which had been erected according to Duryodhana's desire, and it burned fiercely and speedily. Pritha and her sons made swift escape by the underground passage and took refuge in the jungle. In the morning the people discovered among the embers of Purochana's house the blackened remains of his body and the bodies of his servants. In the ruins of the Pandavas' dwelling they found that a woman and five men had perished, and they lamented, believing that Pritha and her sons were dead. There was great sorrow in Hastinapur when the tidings were borne thither. All the people bewailed the fate of the Pandavas. Bhishma and Vidura wept, and blind Dhritarashtra was moved to tears also. But Duryodhana rejoiced in secret, believing that his enemies had all been destroyed.

The Pandavas, having escaped through the subterranean passage, hastened southwards and entered the forest, which abounded with reptiles and wild animals and with ferocious man-eating Asuras and Rakshasas of gigantic stature. Weary and footsore were they all, and greatly oppressed with sleepiness and fear. At length the mighty Bhima lifted up all the others and hastened on through the darkness: he took his mother on his back, and Madri's sons on his shoulders, and Yudhishtira and Arjuna under his arms. He went swifter than the wind, breaking down trees by his breast and furrowing the ground that he stamped upon. The whole forest was shaken as with fear.

Ere the Pandavas had left Hastinapur, Duryodhana sent unto Varanavatha his secret agent, Purochana, to erect a commodious new dwelling for them. This was accomplished with all speed, and it became known as the "house of lac". It was built of combustible material: much hemp and resin were packed in the walls and between the floors, and it was plastered over with mortar well mixed with pitch and clarified butter.

Purochana welcomed the Pandavas when they arrived at Varanavatha, and they wondered at the splendour of the great new dwelling. But Yudhishtira smelt the mortar, and he went over the whole house examining it closely; then he said unto Bhima: "The enemy hath caused this mansion to be erected for us, and their trusted workers have done well for them, for it is full of hemp and straw, resin and bamboo, and the mortar is mixed with pitch and clarified butter."

In due time a stranger visited the Pandavas, and he repeated the secret verse which Vidura had communicated to Yudhishtira. He said: "I will construct for you a secret passage underground which will lead to a place of safety, lest you should have to escape from this house when the doors are made secure and it is set on fire."

So the man set to work in secret, and ere long the underground passage was ready. Then Bhima resolved to deal with Purochana in the very manner that he had undertaken to deal with the princes.

One evening Pritha gave a feast in the new house to all the poor people in Varanavatha. When they had taken their departure, there remained a Bhil woman and her five sons, who had come as was the custom of their people, to sleep up. They slumbered on the

Bhima and spoke to him, saying: "O bull among men, who art thou and whence comest thou? Who are these fair ones lying in slumber there? Hear and know that this forest is the abode of the wicked chieftain of the Rakshasas. He is my brother, and hath sent me hither to kill you all for food, but I desire to save thee, O long-armed one. Be thou my husband. I will take thee to a secret place among the mountains, for I can speed through the air at will."

Said Bhima: "I cannot leave my mother and my brethren to become food for a Rakshasa."

The woman said: "Let me be thy servant. Awaken thy mother and thy brethren and I will rescue you all from my fierce brother."

Said Bhima: "I will not awaken them from pleasant and needful slumber, because I do not fear a Rakshasa. O fair one, thou canst go as it pleaseth thee, and I care not if thou dost send thy brother unto me."

Meantime the Rakshasa chieftain had grown impatient. He descended from his tree and hastened after his sister, with gaping mouth and head thrown back. Darkly blue was his body, like to a raincloud.

The Rakshasa woman said to Bhima: "He cometh hither in wrath. Awaken thy kinsfolk, and I will carry you all through the air to escape him."

Said Bhima: "Look on my arms, which are strong as the trunks of elephants; my legs are like iron maces, and my chest is indeed powerful and broad. I will slay this man-eater, thy brother."

The Rakshasa chieftain heard the boast of Bhima, and he fumed with rage when he beheld his sister in comely human guise, and said to her: "I will slay thee and those whom thou wouldst fain help against me." Then he rushed against her, but Bhima cried: "Thou

wilt not kill a woman while I am here. I challenge thee to single combat now. This night will thy sister behold thee slain by me as an elephant is slain by a lion."

Said the Rakshasa: "Doubt not until thou art the victor. I will kill thee first of all, then thy friends, and last of all my treacherous sister."

Having spoken thus, he rushed towards Bhima, who nimbly seized the monster's outstretched arms and, wrestling violently, cast him on the ground. Then as a lion drags off his prey, Bhima dragged the struggling Rakshasa into the depths of the forest, lest his yells should awaken the sleepers. There they fought together like furious bull elephants, tearing down branches and overthrowing trees.

At length the dread clamour awoke the Pandavas, and they gazed with wonder on the beautiful woman who kept watch in Bhima's place.

Said Pritha: "O celestial being, who art thou? If thou art the goddess of woods or an *Apsara*, tell me why thou dost linger here?"

The fair demon said: "I am the sister of the chieftain of the Rakshasas, and I was sent hither to slay you all; but when I beheld thy mighty son the love god wounded me, and I chose him for my husband. Then my brother followed angrily, and thy son is fighting with him, and they are filling the forest with their shouting."

All the brethren rushed to Bhima's aid, and they saw the two wrestlers struggling in a cloud of dust, and they appeared like two high cliffs shrouded in mist.

Arjuna cried out: "O Bhima, I am here to help thee. Let me slay the monster."

Bhima answered: "Fear not, but look on. The Rakshasa will not escape from my hands."

Said Arjuna: "Do not keep him alive too long. We

must hasten hence. The dawn is near, and Rakshasas become stronger at daybreak; they exercise their powers of deception during the two twilights. Do not play with him, therefore, but kill him speedily."

At these words Bhima became strong as Vayu, his sire, when he is angered,¹ and, raising aloft the Rakshasa, he whirled him round and round, crying: "In vain hast thou gorged on unholy food. I will rid the forest of thee. No longer wilt thou devour human beings."

Then, dashing the monster to the ground, Bhima seized him by the hair and by the waist, laid him over a knee, and broke his back. So was the Rakshasa slain.

Day was breaking, and Pritha and her sons immediately turned away to leave the forest. The Rakshasa woman followed them, and Bhima cried to her: "Begone! or I will send thee after thy brother."

Said Yudhishtira: "It is unseemly to slay a woman. Besides, she is the sister of that Rakshasa, and even although she became angry, what harm can she do us?"

Kneeling at Pritha's feet, the demon wailed: "O illustrious and blessed lady, thou knowest the sufferings women endure when the love god wounds them. Have pity upon me now, and command thy son to take me for his bride. If he continues to scorn me, I will slay myself. Let me be thy slave, and I will carry you all wheresoever you desire and protect you from perils."

Pritha heard her with compassion, and prevailed upon Bhima to take her for his bride. So the two were married by Yudhishtira; then the Rakshasa took Bhima upon her back and sped through the air to a lonely place among the mountains which is sacred to the gods. They lived together beside silvery streams and lakes sparkling with

¹ The god of wind.

lotus blooms; they wandered through woods of blossoming trees where birds sang sweetly, and by celestial sea-beaches covered with pearls and nuggets of gold. The demon bride had assumed celestial beauty, and oftentimes played sweet music, and she made Bhima happy.

In time the woman became the mother of a mighty son; his eyes were fiercely bright, like arrows were his ears, and his mouth was large; he had copper-brown lips and long, sharp teeth. He grew to be a youth an hour after he was born, but, still remaining bald, his mother named him Ghatotkacha, which signifies "pot-headed".¹

Bhima then returned to his mother and his brethren with his demon bride and her son. They abode together for a time in the forest; then the Rakshasa bade all the Pandavas farewell and departed with Ghatotkacha, who promised to come to aid the Pandavas whenever they called upon him.

One day thereafter Vyasa appeared before the Pandavas and counselled them to go towards the city of Eka-chakra² and to live there for a time in the house of a Brahman. Then he vanished from sight, promising to come again.

The Pandavas went therefore to Eka-chakra and lived with a Brahman who had a wife and a daughter and an infant son. Disguised as holy men, the brethren begged for food as alms. Every evening they brought home what they had obtained, and Pritha divided the whole into two portions; the one half she gave to wolf-bellied Bhima, and the rest she kept for his brethren and herself.

Now the city of Eka-chakra was protected against every enemy by a forest-dwelling Rakshasa named Vaka,

¹ Bald as a pot. *Pron. gat-ot-katch'a.*

² *Pron. eka-chak'ra.*

who was king of the Asuras.¹ Each day the people had to supply him with food, which consisted of a cartload of rice, two bullocks, and the man who conveyed the meal to him.

One morning a great wailing broke forth in the Brahman's house because that the holy man was required to supply the demon's feast. He was too poor to purchase a slave, and he said he would deliver himself unto Vaka. "Although I reach Heaven," he cried, "I will have no joy, for my family will perish when I am gone." His wife and his daughter pleaded in turn to take his place, and the three wept together. Then the little boy of tender years plucked a long spear of grass, and with glowing eyes he spoke sweetly and said: "Do not weep, Father; do not weep, Mother; do not weep, Sister. With this spear I will slay the demon who devours human beings."

As they wept there they heard him, nor could forbear smiling.

Pritha was deeply moved by the lamentations of the Brahman family, and she said: "Sorrow not. I will send forth my son Bhima to slay the Asura king."

The Brahman made answer, saying: "That cannot be. Thy sons are Brahmans and are under my protection. If I go forth, I will but obey the rajah; if I send thy son, I will be sin-guilty of his death, for the gods abhor the man who causeth a guest to be slain, or permits a Brahman to perish."

Said Pritha: "Bhima is strong and mighty, nor can a demon do him any harm. He will slay this bloodthirsty Rakshasa and return again in safety. But, O Brahman, thou must not reveal unto anyone who hath performed

¹ As a rule the Asuras are the enemies of the gods and the Rakshasas the enemies of mankind. See Chapter IV.

this mighty deed, lest the people should trouble my son and desire to obtain the secret of his power, for he is skilled in mantras."¹

Then was the household made happy, and Bhima prepared to go forth. That mighty hero collected the rice and drove the bullocks towards the forest. When he drew nigh to the appointed place, he began to eat the food himself, and called the Rakshasa by name over and over again. Vaka heard and came through the trees towards Bhima. Red were his eyes, and his hair and his beard were red also; his ears were pointed like arrows; he had a mouth like a cave, and his forehead was puckered in three lines. Terrible was he to look upon; his body was huge, indeed.²

The Rakshasa saw Bhima eating his meal, and approached angrily, biting his lower lip. "Fool," he cried, "wouldst thou devour my food before my very eyes?"

Bhima smiled, and continued eating with face averted. The demon smote him, but the hero only glanced round as if one had touched his shoulder, and he went on eating as before.

Raging furiously, the Rakshasa tore up a tree, and Bhima rose leisurely and waited until it was flung at him. When that was done, he caught the trunk nimbly and hurled it back. Many trees were uprooted and flung by one at the other. Then Vaka sprung forward to wrestle, but the Pandava overthrew him and dragged

¹ Charma.

² A man-devouring demon was supposed to sit under a bridge in Carthage every night. When a late wayfarer began to walk over, the monster growled, "Tramp, tramp, tramp", so as to terrify him and obtain him for food. According to local belief the demon "had eyes like a saucer, a nose like a poker, and a mouth like a cave". The Egyptian demon Set was red like the Indian Rakshasa. Red-haired people are disliked in India still; a native girl with auburn locks is not cared for as a bride.

him round and round until the demon gasped with fatigue. The earth shook; trees were splintered in pieces. Then Bhima began to strike the monster with his iron fists, and at length he broke Vaka's back across his knee. Terrible were the loud screams of the Rakshasa while Bhima was bending him double. He died howling.

A mighty clamour was then awakened in the forest. All the other Asuras were terror-stricken, and, bellowing horribly, they hastened towards Bhima and made obeisance before him. Then Bhima made them take vows never again to eat human flesh or to oppress the people of the city. They promised willing obedience, and he allowed them to depart.

Thereafter Pritha's son dragged the monster's body to the main gate of Eka-chakra. He entered the city secretly and hastened to the Brahman's house, and he told Yudhishthira all that had taken place.

When the people of the city discovered that the Asura king had been slain, they rejoiced greatly, and hastened towards the house of the Brahman. But that holy man made evasive answer to them, and said that his deliverer was a certain high-souled Brahman who had offered to supply food to the demon. Thereafter the people established a festival in honour of Brahmins.

The Pandavas remained a time in the city, and they studied the Vedas. One day there came to their dwelling a saintly man of rigid vows, and he told the story of the miraculous births of Drupada's son and daughter from sacrificial fire.

When Drupada had lost half of his kingdom, he paid pilgrimages to holy places. He promised great rewards to superior Brahmins, so that he might have offspring, ever desiring greatly to be avenged upon Drona. He

offered the austere Upayāja a million cows if he would procure a son for him, and that sage sent him unto his brother Yāja. Now Yāja was reluctant to aid the rajah thus; but at length he consented to perform the sacrificial rite, and prevailed upon Upayāja to help him.

So the rite was performed, and when the vital moment came, the Brahmans called for the queen to partake in it. But Drupada's wife was not prepared, and said: "My mouth is still filled with saffron and my body is scented. I am not fit to receive the libation which will bring offspring. Tarry a little time for me."

But the Brahmans could not delay the consummation of the sacrificial rite. Ere the queen came, a son sprang forth from the flames: he was clad in full armour, and carried a falchion and bow, and a diadem gleamed brightly upon his head. A voice out of the heavens said: "*This prince hath come to destroy Drona and to increase the fame of the Panchalas*".

Next arose from the ashes on the altar a daughter of great beauty. She was exceedingly dark, with long curling locks and lotus eyes, and she was deep-bosomed and slender-waisted. A sweet odour clung to her body.

A voice out of heaven said: "*This dusky girl will become the chief of all women. Many Kshatriyas must die because of her, and the Kauravas will suffer from her. She will accomplish the decrees of the gods.*"

Then the son was called Dhrishṭa-dyumna¹ and the daughter Draupadi.² Drona thereafter took the Panchala prince to his palace, and instructed him to become an accomplished warrior. He knew that he could not thwart destiny, and he desired to perpetuate his own mighty deeds.

¹ From *dhrishṭa* and *dyumna*.

² From *drau* and *padi*.

Having heard these words, Pritha desired to journey towards Panchala, and she and her sons took leave of their host. Ere they went away, the high-souled ascetic said that Draupadi had been destined to become a Pandava queen.

Pritha and her sons wandered from the banks of the Ganges and went northwards, and soon they fell in with great numbers of people all going the same way. Yudhishtira spake to a troop of Brahmans, and asked them whither they were bound, and they answered saying that Drupada of Panchala was observing a great festival, and that all the princes of the land were hastening to the swayamvara of his peerless and slender-waisted daughter, the beautiful Draupadi.

In that great and increasing company were Brahmans who were to perform the sacred rites, and youths who were to take part in joyous revelry—dancers and jugglers, boxers and wrestlers, and those who displayed feats of strength and skill at arms; there were also bards there and singers to chant the praises of heroes.

The Brahmans praised the beauty of Draupadi, and said to the Pandava brethren: "Come with us to the festival and the sports and the swayamvara; you will be feasted and will receive gifts. You are all as comely as princes and as fair as the bright gods; mayhap Draupadi may choose from among ye this stalwart and noble youth, strongly armed and of fearless bearing, and if he should perform mighty feats, the garland may be thrown upon his shoulders."

Said Yudhishtira: "So be it. We will hasten with you to the swayamvara and share banquet and bounty."

So the Pandavas went towards Panchala with the troop of Brahmans. When they reached the city they

took up their abode in the humble dwelling of a potter, still disguised as Brahmans, and they went out and begged food from the people.

In their secret hearts the brethren desired greatly to win the fair bride whose fame had been bruited abroad.

CHAPTER XIII

The Choice of Draupadi

Drupada's Hope—Conditions for winning his Daughter—The Great Bow and Whirling Target—The Swayamvara—Pandavas in Disguise—Love sick Rajahs put to Shame—Karna strings the Bow—Rejected as a Base born Suitor—Arjuna's Triumph—Chosen by Princess—An Angry Scene—Rajahs seek Vengeance—Warriors attack Supposed Brahmana—Karna and Salya overcome—Princess taken to Potter's House—Pritha's Command—An Evening Meal—The Royal Spy

Now Drupada had long cherished the hope that Arjuna would become his daughter's husband. He never revealed his wish to any man, but ere he proclaimed the swayamvara of Draupadi, he thought of the great Pandava archer, and caused to be made a powerful bow which only a strong man could bend and string. For a target he had constructed a strange and curious device: a high pole was erected, and it was surmounted by a golden fish, which was poised above a swiftly-revolving wheel. Then Drupada issued a proclamation far and wide summoning the regents and princes of the world to the swayamvara. He said: "The man who will bend the bow and shoot an arrow through the wheel which will strike and bring down the golden fish shall obtain my daughter in marriage." None but a mighty archer who was Arjuna's equal could hope to win the beautiful Draupadi, for five arrows only were allowed to each competitor, and the fish must needs be struck on an eye to be brought down.

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saw also Krishna, the amorous and powerful one, and his brother, the wine-drinking Balarama¹, the Yádava princes, the Rajah of Sindhu and his sons, the Rajah of Chedi, the Rajah of Kosala, the Rajah of Madra, and many more. Now the Pandavas were still disguised as Brahmans, and stood among the holy men.

An aged and white-haired Brahman, clad in white, approached the high altar, chanting mantras. He spread the holy grass and poured out oil; then he kindled the sacred fire, and the offering to the gods was blessed.

Thereafter the thousand trumpets were sounded, and a tense silence fell upon the buzzing crowd. In the solemn hush all eyes were turned towards the royal mansion as Drupada's valiant son, Dhrishta-dyumna, led forth his sister Draupadi, and in a voice like thunder proclaimed his father's will, saying:

"Here stands the noble princess, my sister. Whosoever can bend this bow, and strike with an arrow yonder whirling target set on high, may, if his lineage is noble, claim Draupadi for his bride. My words are truth!"

Having spoken thus, the prince recited to his sister the names of the royal guests, their lineage and their deeds of fame, and bade her award the golden garland to the successful archer.

The rajahs then descended from their gorgeous thrones and gathered around Draupadi as the bright gods gather around Párvati, the mountain bride of Shiva. Their hearts were filled with love for the maiden and with hate for one another. Rivals frowned upon rivals. Those who had been close friends became of a sudden angry enemies because that Draupadi was so beautiful. Krishna

¹ *From, bal-a rah'ma.*

A great field was enclosed for the *awayamvara*. It was surrounded by a fosse and barrier and swan-white pavilions, with domes and turrets that were agleam with gold and jewels, festoons and streamers and bright garlands. The turrets of the royal mansion were lofty and golden like Himalayan mountain peaks.

For sixteen days there were sports and banquets, and everyone within the city made merry. Then came the great and festal day. At dawn trumpets and drums awakened the people, and flags and flowers decorated every street. The whole populace gathered on the plain and massed around the barriers. The rajah's soldiers kept order, and wrestlers and jugglers and dancers and musicians performed merrily until the appointed hour drew nigh.

At length the people roared their welcome to the king and the high-born ladies and all the royal guests, who thronged the galleries and pavilions. The mighty rajahs, frowning defiance one upon another, were ranged on lofty seats round the throne of King Drupada. Multitudes had gathered to gaze on the glittering scene, pressing against the barriers, or clustering on trees and scaffolds, while others looked down from lofty lattice and high house roofs. . . . A thousand trumpets clamoured; and the murmuring of the swaying people was like the voice of the heaving main.

Among others came in all her beauty the Princess Draupadi, stepping gently and sweet, bearing in a delicate hand the golden bridal garland, which was adorned with sparkling gems. Tardily she made approach, blushing with increasing loveliness, and appeared in the presence of the princes. Mighty and high-born men were there. The Pandavas beheld in the galleries their enemies Duryodhana, Karna, and all the great Kauravas, and they

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¹ *Pron. bal-a-cah'ma.*

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¹ *Prea, bal-a-rah'ma.*

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At length the people roared their welcome to the king and the high-born ladies and all the royal guests, who thronged the galleries and pavilions. The mighty rajahs, frowning defiance one upon another, were ranged on lofty seats round the throne of King Drupada. Multitudes had gathered to gaze on the glittering scene, pressing against the barriers, or clustering on trees and scaffolds, while others looked down from lofty lattice and high house roofs. . . . A thousand trumpets clamoured; and the murmuring of the swaying people was like the voice of the heaving main.

Among others came in all her beauty the Princess Draupadi, stepping gently and sweet, bearing in a delicate hand the golden bridal garland, which was adorned with sparkling gems. Tardily she made approach, blushing with increasing loveliness, and appeared in the presence of the princes. Mighty and high-born men were there. The Pandavas beheld in the galleries their enemies Duryodhana, Karna, and all the great Kauravas, and they

saw also Krishna, the amorous and powerful one, and his brother, the wine-drinking Balarama¹, the Yádava princes, the Rajah of Sindhu and his sons, the Rajah of Chedi, the Rajah of Kosala, the Rajah of Madra, and many more. Now the Pandavas were still disguised as Brahmans, and stood among the holy men.

An aged and white-haired Brahman, clad in white, approached the high altar, chanting mantras. He spread the holy grass and poured out oil; then he kindled the sacred fire, and the offering to the gods was blessed.

Thereafter the thousand trumpets were sounded, and a tense silence fell upon the buzzing crowd. In the solemn hush all eyes were turned towards the royal mansion as Drupada's valiant son, Dhrishta-dyumna, led forth his sister Draupadi, and in a voice like thunder proclaimed his father's will, saying:

"Here stands the noble princess, my sister. Whosoever can bend this bow, and strike with an arrow yonder whirling target set on high, may, if his lineage is noble, claim Draupadi for his bride. My words are truth!"

Having spoken thus, the prince recited to his sister the names of the royal guests, their lineage and their deeds of fame, and bade her award the golden garland to the successful archer.

The rajahs then descended from their gorgeous thrones and gathered around Draupadi as the bright gods gather around Párvati, the mountain bride of Shiva. Their hearts were filled with love for the maiden and with hate for one another. Rivals frowned upon rivals. Those who had been close friends became of a sudden angry enemies because that Draupadi was so beautiful. Krishna

¹ *Prod. bal-a-rah'ma.*

and Balarama alone remained aloof; calmly and self-restrained they stood apart, while rajah opposed rajah like to angry elephants.

Each of the love-sick monarchs gazed upon the mighty bow and upon the whirling target on high, and for a time no man sought to lift the bow lest he should be unable to bend it and then be put to shame. At length a rajah, more bold than the others, picked it up and tried his strength without avail; another followed and another, but failed to string it. Soon many rajahs strained their arms in vain, and some fell upon the ground and groaned, while the laughter of the people pealed around the barriers. . . . The gods had assembled in mid-air and looked down with steadfast eyes.

At length proud Karna strode forward; he took the bow and bent it and fixed the bowstring. Then he seized an arrow. Drupada and his son were alarmed, fearing he might succeed and claim the bride. Suddenly Draupadi intervened, for she would not have the son of a charioteer for her lord. She said, speaking loudly: "I am a king's daughter, and will not wed with the base-born. . . ."

Karna smiled bitterly, his face aflame. He cast down the bow and walked away, gazing towards the sun. He said: "O sun! be my witness that I cast aside the bow, not because I am unable to hit the mark, but because Draupadi scorns me."

Others sought to perform the feat, but in vain, and many rajahs feared to make attempt lest they should compel the laughter of the people. A buzz of merry voices arose from beyond the barriers.

Meanwhile the Pandava brethren, disguised as Brahmans, looked on with the others.

Then suddenly silence fell upon everyone, for Arjuna

advanced from the priestly band to lift the bow. The Brahmans applauded him, shaking their deerskins.

Said the rajahs: "Can a weakly Brahman, who is a mere stripling, accomplish a feat which is beyond the strength of mighty warriors."

Others said: "The Brahman knoweth best his own skill. He would not go forward if he were not confident of success."

An aged priest endeavoured to restrain Arjuna, lest he should by his failure bring ridicule upon the Brahmans; but the hero would not be thwarted. He strode forward like to a stately elephant and bared his broad shoulders and ample chest. He was nimble as a lion, and calm and self-possessed.

Ere he lifted the bow, he walked round it; then he addressed a prayer to the gods. . . . He stood up unmoved and serene as a mountain peak, and he bent the bow and fixed an arrow in it. . . .

All eyes watched him. He drew the cord, and the arrow flew upwards with a hissing sound; it hit the target eye, and the golden fish fell over and clashed upon the ground.

Like distant thunder arose the plaudits of the multitude; hundreds of Brahmans shouted in ecstasy and waved their scarfs; a thousand trumpets clamoured in triumph, and the drums were beaten loud. . . .

The heart of Draupadi was filled with joy, and, smiling coyly, she advanced towards Arjuna and flung the golden bridal garland over his shoulders. Celestial blossoms fluttered, descending through the air, and the sound of celestial music was heard.

Drupada was well pleased, because he had already recognized the hero in his Brahman guise; but the jealous rajahs stormed in fury, and each said unto the other:

"Behold! the king goeth to greet this youth. To him we are as worthless as jungle grass; he tramples upon us in his pride. . . . Are we to be humbled by a Brahman and denied the fruit of our nourished hopes? The daughter of a rajah must even choose a Kshatriya for her husband. . . . Verily, the life of a priest is sacred, but the rajah who scorns his peers must die—he and his son together. Let us seize also this shameless woman who honours the Brahman—that trespasser of our birthright—so that she may be burned at the stake!"

Shouting with anger one to another, the rajahs poured from the galleries with drawn swords and rushed towards Arjuna and the princess. Like ponderous wild elephants they advanced; but the Pandavas rose against them. Arjuna bent the great bow, and Bhima, having no weapon, uprooted a tree and stood defying them like to hell's stern judge wielding his mighty club. Yudhishtira and the younger brothers were soon beside them, and the Brahmans hastened also to give their aid.

For a moment the rajahs paused, wondering at the daring of the priestly band; but impatient Karna and angry Salya, Rajah of Madra, dashed forward like to infuriated elephants against Arjuna and Bhima. The brothers sustained the shock, and when Karna had been struck by Arjuna, he faltered in amaze and said: "Brahman, who art thou? Art thou a god in human guise? No Brahman could thus attack me, nor dost there live a man who can thwart me with defiance as thou hast done even now, save Arjuna alone."

Said Arjuna, "I am nor god nor hero, but a humble Brahman who hath been trained to use of arms. I have come hither to tame thy pride, thou haughty youth; therefore be firm."

But Karna fell back, deeming it vain to oppose the power of a holy man.

Meanwhile Madra's king fought against peerless Bhima. Both were long-armed and of gigantic strength. Sharp and fierce was their conflict. When their clubs were splintered, they leapt one upon the other and wrestled fiercely, struggling with all their might. Then, of a sudden, Bhima stopped and swung aloft the mighty rajah and threw him heavily upon the ground, where he lay unconscious and bleeding before the eyes of the multitude.

The rajahs drew back, humbled because of Karna's flight and Salya's downfall.

"Brave, indeed, are the Brahmans," they said. "Who can they be? What is their lineage? and whence come they?"

The Pandavas scorned to make answer. But Krishna had knowledge of who they were, and he interposed with gentle words to soothe the angry rajahs. The monarchs heard him and withdrew, and the tumult was appeased.

Then Arjuna took Draupadi by the hand and led her away in peace from that scene of angry strife. So ended the swayamvara, and Krishna declared that the bride had been fairly won.

The Pandava brethren went towards the house of the potter, and they entered and addressed their mother Pritha, saying: "A great gift have we obtained this day."

Said Pritha: "Then share the gift between you, as becomes brethren."

Yudhishthira said: "What hast thou said, O mother? The gift is the Princess Draupadi whom Arjuna hath won at the swayamvara."

Said Pritha: "Alas! what have I said? I have sinned deeply in saying, 'Then share the gift between you, as

become brethren.' But, O Yudhishthira, my son, the fatal words have been spoken; you must denote how they can be obeyed without involving one another in wrong."

Yudhishthira pondered a time and then spoke to Arjuna, saying "My brother, thou hast won Draupadi by thine own merit. She must therefore be thy bride."

Said Arjuna: "Thou, Yudhishthira, art our elder brother and we are thy servants. The princess is for thee."

Yudhishthira said "Let this matter be arranged in accordance with the will of the gods. It is for Drupada to say unto which of us his daughter will be given."

Now, as hath already been told, each one of the Pandavas yearned in his secret heart to have Draupadi for his bride. . . .

Meanwhile the evening meal had been prepared, and Pritha desired that the princess should at once take her place, and serve out the portions to the brethren. So she said unto Draupadi: "Divide the food, and first set aside a share for the poor; then cut what is left into two parts, one part for Bhima, and the rest for my other sons and for thee and me."

The princess smiled when she beheld the great meal which Bhima devoured.

When they had all eaten they retired to rest. Draupadi slept with Pritha, and the brethren lay at their feet.

King Drupada was sore troubled in heart after his daughter had been led away to the potter's house, and he sent his valiant son to watch her. Dhrishta-dyumna went forth in disguise, and, listening at the window, he discovered to his joy that the Brahmans were no other than the Pandava brethren. He returned to his royal sire and related all that had happened, and what had been

spoken at the evening meal. The king was well pleased because that the brethren were Kshatriyas and not Brahmans.

In the morning Drupada sent a priest to the potter's house to ask how it fared with all the brethren.

Said Yudhishtira: "Inform thou the rajah that his daughter hath been won by a family who will not bring shame or disgrace upon his royal name. None but a man of high birth could have shot down the fish of gold."

Drupada, ere this message was delivered unto him, sent a second messenger bidding the brethren to come to the palace because that the nuptial feast was ready. . . . Two chariots awaited them. Then Pritha and Draupadi entered one of the chariots together, and the five brethren entered the other, and they were all driven towards the royal palace.

When the people beheld the Pandavas and marked their comely bearing and royal gait, they knew that they were not Brahmans, but high-born Kshatriyas.

The Pandava guests were made welcome, and the king and his son and all his counsellors sat down to feast with them.

Said the rajah at length unto Yudhishtira: "I perceive that you are men of high birth. Tell me, therefore, I pray thee, who ye are—your names and your lineage."

Yudhishtira said: "We are of humble birth. Do now with us as is thy desire."

Said Drupada: "In Indra's name, I adjure thee to reveal yourselves unto me now."

Yudhishtira said: "Know, then, that we are the Pandava princes. . . . Our brother Arjuna was the winner of Draupadi. Thy daughter, like to a lotus,

hath been but transferred from one lake to another. I have spoken what is true."

Drupada glowed with joy and satisfaction. He prevailed upon the brethren to remain at the palace, and entertained them for many days.

At length Yudhishtira was addressed by Drupada, who said: "Thou art the elder brother. Speak and say if it is thy desire that Arjuna be given Draupadi for his bride."

Said Yudhishtira: "I would fain speak with Vyasa, the great Rishi, regarding this matter."

Now Vyasa was in the city of Panchala at that time, and he was brought before the rajah, who spake to him regarding Draupadi.

The Rishi said: "The gods have already declared that she will become the wife of all the five Pandava brethren."

Drupada's son spoke and said: "With reverence I have heard thy words, O Vyasa, but to me it appears that Draupadi hath been betrothed unto Arjuna alone."

Said Yudhishtira: "Thou hast spoken truly, but there is wisdom in the words of Vyasa which in my heart I cannot condemn. Besides, our mother hath already commanded us to share our gift together."

Then Vyasa told that Draupadi was the re-incarnation of a pious woman who once prayed unto the god Shiva for a husband: five times she prayed, and the god rewarded her with the promise of five husbands in her next existence. Vyasa also revealed that the Pandava brethren were five incarnations of Indra, and thus were but as one.

Drupada then gave consent for his daughter to become the bride of all the brethren, and it was arranged that she should be married unto them all, one after the

other, according to their ages. So on five successive days she was led round the holy fire by each of the five Pandava princes.

Drupada thereafter conferred great gifts upon his sons-in-law; he gave them much gold and many jewels, and he gave them numerous horses and chariots and elephants, and also a hundred female servants clad in many-coloured robes, and adorned with gems and bright garlands. Unto the Pandavas Krishna gave much raiment and ornaments of gold, and rare vessels sparkling with jewels, besides female servants from various kingdoms.

Now when Duryodhana came to know that the Pandava brethren were still alive, and had formed a powerful alliance with Drupada, he was moved to jealous wrath. A great council was held, at which the young men clamoured for war and the grave elders spoke in favour of peace. At length it was agreed that the Pandava princes should be invited to return to Hastinapur so that the raj might be divided between them and the sons of Dhritarashtra. Then Vidura was sent to Panchala to speak with the Rajah Drupada and his sons-in-law regarding this matter.

called Indra-prastha.¹ High walls, which resembled the Mandara mountains, were built round about, and these were surrounded by a deep moat wide as the sea.

In time the fame of Rajah Yudhishthira went far and wide. He ruled with wisdom and with power, and he had great piety. Forest robbers were pursued constantly and put to death, and wrongdoers were ever brought to justice; indeed, the people who suffered from evil-doing went before the rajah as children go before a father seeking redress.

The brethren lived happily together. In accordance with the advice of a Rishi, they made a compact that when one of them was sitting beside Draupadi, none of the others should enter, and that if one of them should be guilty of intrusion, he must needs go into exile for the space of twelve years.

As it chanced, Yudhishthira was sitting with Draupadi one day when a Brahman, whose cattle had been carried off, hastened to Arjuna and entreated him to pursue the band of robbers. The weapons of the prince were in the king's palace, and to obtain them Arjuna entered the room in which Yudhishthira and Draupadi sat, thus breaking the compact made by the brethren. He hastened after the robbers and recovered the stolen cattle, which he brought back unto the Brahman.

On his return to the palace, Arjuna said unto his brother that he must needs become an exile for twelve years to expiate his offence. Yudhishthira, however, sought to prevail upon him not to depart. But Arjuna made answer that he had pledged his oath to fulfil the terms of the compact. "I cannot waver from truth," he said; "truth is my weapon." So when he had bidden farewell to Pritha and Draupadi and his four brethren,

¹ *Pras. indra-prast'ha.*

CHAPTER XIV

Triumph of the Pandavas

Pandavas visit Drupada's Palace—Their Identity revealed—Draupadi's Five Husbands—Kingdom assigned to Pandavas—Building of Indra-prastha—Arjuna goes into Exile—His Serpent Bride—Marriage in Manipur—An Heir to a Throne—Meeting with Krishna—Abduction of Princess—Miraculous Origin of Jarasandhu—His Two Mothers—Slain by Bhima—The Imperial Sacrifice—Krishna kills Shishupala—Yudhishtira's Triumph—Jealousy of Duryodhana

THE Pandava brethren returned to Hastinapur with Vidura. They took with them their mother, Queen Pritha, and their wife, Draupadi, and the people went forth in great multitudes and bade them glad welcome. Then there was much rejoicing and many banquets.

At length Dhritarashtra spake unto Yudhishtira and his brethren and said: "I will now divide the raj between you and my sons. Your share will be the south-western country of Khandava-prastha."

Said Bhishma: "The maharajah hath spoken wisely. It is meet that you should depart unto the country of Khandava-prastha as he hath decreed."

So the Pandava princes bade farewell to all their kinsmen and to wise Drona, and they went towards their own country. On the banks of the Jumna they built a strong fort, and in time they made a great clearance in the forest. When they had gathered together the people who were subject unto them, they erected a great and wonderful city like unto the city of Indra, and it was

the holy mountain of Raivataka, which lasted for two days. Arjuna looked with love upon Krishna's fair sister, Subhadra¹, a girl of sweet smiles, and desired her for a bride.

Now it was the wish of Balarama that Subhadra should be given unto Duryodhana, whom, indeed, she would have chosen had a swayamvara been held. So Krishna advised Arjuna to carry her away by force, in accordance with the advice of the sages, who had said aforetime: "Men applaud the Kshatriyas who win brides by abducting them."

When the feast was over, Arjuna drove his chariot from the holy mountain towards Dwaraka until he came nigh to Subhadra. Nimble he leapt down and took her by the hand and lifted her into his chariot; then he drove hastily towards the city of Indra-prastha.

Balarama was greatly angered, and desired to pursue Arjuna; and he spoke to Krishna, saying: "Thou art calm, and I can perceive that Arjuna has done this thing with thy knowledge. Thou shouldst not have given our sister unto him without my consent. But let the deed be upon his own head, for I will pursue him and slay him and his brethren, one and all."

Said Krishna: "Arjuna is our kinsman² and of noble birth, and is a worthy husband for Subhadra. If thou wilt pursue him and bring back our sister, no one else will marry her now because that she hath been in the house of another. Better were it that we should send messengers after Arjuna and invite him to return here, so that the marriage may be held according to our rites."

Balarama said: "So be it, seeing that thou art well pleased with this matter."

¹ From *subhadrâ*.

² Krishna's father, Vasudeva, was the brother of Pritha, mother of Arjuna.

he took his departure from the city of Indra-prastha. And a band of Brahmans went with him.

Arjuna wandered through the jungle, and he visited many holy places. One day he went unto Hurdwar, where the Ganges flows upon the plain, and he bathed in the holy waters. There he met with Ulûpi, daughter of Vāsuka, king of the Nagas, who had great beauty. She loved him, and she led him to her father's palace, where he abode a time, and she gave him the power to render himself invisible in water. A child was born unto them, and he was named Iravat.

Thereafterwards Arjuna went southwards until he came to the Mahendra mountain.¹ He was received there by Parasu Rama, the Brahman hero, who gave him gifts of powerful weapons, and imparted to him the secret of using them.

So he wandered from holy place to holy place until he reached Manipur. Now the rajah of that place had a beautiful daughter whose name was Chitrāngadā. Arjuna loved her, and sought her for his bride. The rajah said: "I have no other child, and if I give her unto thee, her son must remain here to become my heir, for the god Shiva hath decreed that the rajahs of this realm can have each but one child." Arjuna married the maiden, and he dwelt for three years at Manipur. A son was born, and he was named Chitrangada. Thereafter Arjuna set out on his wanderings once more.

He passed through many strange lands, travelling westward, and at length he reached the city of Prabhāsā,² which is nigh to Dwārakā, on the southern sea, the capital of his kinsman Krishna, rajah of the Yādavas.

Krishna welcomed Arjuna, and took the Pandava hero to dwell in his palace. Then he gave a great feast on

¹ In Sanskrit sources, Mahendra.

² From prabhāsa.

the holy mountain of Raivataka, which lasted for two days. Arjuna looked with love upon Krishna's fair sister, Subhadra¹, a girl of sweet smiles, and desired her for a bride.

Now it was the wish of Balarama that Subhadra should be given unto Duryodhana, whom, indeed, she would have chosen had a swayamvara been held. So Krishna advised Arjuna to carry her away by force, in accordance with the advice of the sages, who had said aforetime: "Men applaud the Kshatriyas who win brides by abducting them."

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Said Krishna: "Arjuna is our kinsman² and of noble birth, and is a worthy husband for Subhadra. If thou wilt pursue him and bring back our sister, no one else will marry her now because that she hath been in the house of another. Better were it that we should send messengers after Arjuna and invite him to return here, so that the marriage may be held according to our rites."

Balarama said: "So be it, seeing that thou art well pleased with this matter."

¹ *Prose.* sūbhadra.

² Krishna's father, Vasudeva, was the brother of Pritha, mother of Arjuna.

Thus it came to pass that messengers followed Arjuna and prevailed upon him to return with Subhadra to Dwaraka. A great feast was then held, and they were married with pomp and in state. And Arjuna abode at the court of Krishna for many months, until the time of his exile came to an end.

When Arjuna returned to Indra-prastha with Subhadra, he was received with great rejoicing by his brethren. He went unto Draupadi and greeted her; but she said coldly: "Why come hither? Where is the sister of Krishna?"

Arjuna soothed her with gentle words; and then Subhadra approached Draupadi, attired in red silk, but in the simple fashion of a keeper of cows, and made obeisance before her, saying: "I am thy handmaiden."

Draupadi embraced the sister of Krishna and said: "Let thy husband be without an enemy."

The heart of Subhadra was filled with joy at these words; she said: "So be it."

Thus was peace made; the two women thereafter loved one another, and to Pritha both were very dear.

Now Draupadi became the mother of five sons to her five husbands; and Subhadra had one son only, and his name was Abhimanyu¹, who in the years that followed was an illustrious warrior.

As time went on, the Pandavas grew more and more powerful. They waged great wars, until many rajahs owed them allegiance; and at length Yudhishtira deemed that the time had come to hold his great Rajasûya sacrifice to celebrate the supremacy of his power over all.

Krishna came to Indra-prastha at this time and said: "There is now but one rajah who must needs be over-

¹ From abhimanyu ("a" as in "ban").

come ere the Imperial sacrifice can be performed: his name is Jarasandha, monarch of Magadha. He hath already conquered six-and-eighty kings, and he hath slaughtered those who were our kinsmen dear."

Now this rajah was of great valour and matchless strength. His body was invulnerable against weapons; not even the gods could wound him with mace or sword or with arrow. He was also of miraculous birth, for he was born of two mothers¹ who had eaten of a mantra-charmed mango which fell into the lap of his sire when that he was childless and was undergoing penances to obtain offspring. Nor did the babe come to life after birth until he was united by a Rakshasa woman, named Jara, the goddess of the household, who, because she was worshipped in the palace, performed some good each day in return.² So the child was called Jarasandha³, which signifies "united by Jara", and he increased daily like to the moon in its first phase.

Krishna said unto Yudhishtira: "This monarch of Magadha cannot be vanquished in battle even by gods or by demons. But he may be overcome in a conflict, fighting with bare arms. Now I am 'Policy', Bhima is 'Strength', and Arjuna is 'Protector'. Together, O king, we will surely accomplish the death of Jarasandha, who is arrogant and covetous and proud."

Said Yudhishtira: "Do as it seemeth best unto thee, O lord of the universe; thou art our wise counsellor and guide."

Then Krishna, Arjuna, and Bhima disguised themselves as Brahmans and went towards the city of Mathura, which was Jarasandha's capital. When they arrived there

¹In one of the Egyptian temple chants Osiris is called "the progeny of the two cows Isis and Nephtys".

²Like the European household elves and fairies.

³From ja-ra-sand'ha.

they entered the palace of the mighty rajah like to mountain lions eyeing cattle-folds. They went boldly before the king decked with flowers, and the king said: "Ye are welcome."

Arjuna and Bhima were silent, but Krishna spake to Jarasandha, saying: "These two men are observing vows, and will not open their mouths until midnight; after that hour they will speak."

The king provided for his guests in the sacrificial chamber, and after midnight he visited them, and discovering that they were warriors, he asked: "Tell me truly who ye are, and why ye have come hither."

Said Krishna: "We are decked with flowers to achieve prosperity, and we have entered the abode of our enemy to fulfil the vows of Kshatriyas."

Jarasandha said: "I have never done you an injury. Why, therefore, do ye regard me as your enemy?"

Then Krishna revealed himself, and upbraided the king because that he was wont to offer up in sacrifice to Shiva the rajahs whom he took captive in battle. He said: "Thou hast slaughtered our kinsmen in this manner because thou dost imagine there liveth no man who is so powerful as thou. For thy sins thou art doomed to go to Yama's kingdom, there to be tortured a time. But thou canst attain to the Heaven of Indra by dying the death of a Kshatriya in battle with thy peers. Now, O king, we challenge thee to combat. Set free the rajahs who are in thy dungeons, or die at our hands!"

Said the king: "I have taken captive in battle these royal prisoners of mine, whom I shall offer in sacrifice to Shiva, according to my vow. Let us therefore meet in battle, army against army, or in single combat."

Krishna said: "Meet thou one of us in single combat. With whom dost thou desire to fight?"

Then Jarasandha expressed his wish to meet Bhima in battle. Bhima was made glad thereof, for, in truth, he thirsted for the conflict; but he desired that they should fight without weapons, and the king consented, and made ready for the fray.

Now Jarasandha was of lofty stature and great strength, and he fought so fiercely that the combat lasted for thirteen days in presence of great multitudes of the people. In the end the king was swung aloft, and his back was broken over Bhima's knee. Then a mighty tumult arose, which caused all who were there to quake with fear, for the roar of the Pandavas mingled with the shrieks of Jarasandha ere death silenced him.

Krishna went boldly into the palace and set free all the rajahs who were in captivity. And one by one they took vows to attend the Imperial sacrifice. Then Krishna received Sahadeva, son of Jarasandha, and installed him as Rajah of Magadha.

When the great Yudhishtira came to know that Jarasandha had been slain, he sent forth his four brethren with great armies to collect tribute from every rajah in the world.¹ Some there were among the kings who welcomed them; others had to be conquered in battle. But when they had sworn allegiance to Yudhishtira, they joined the Pandava force and assisted in achieving further victories. A whole year went past ere the brethren returned again unto Indra-prastha.

Krishna came from Dwaraka to aid Yudhishtira at the ceremony, and he brought with him much wealth and a mighty army.

Stately pavilions were erected for the kings who came

¹ That is, in Northern India.

said, "is the origin of all things; the universe came into being for him alone. He is the incarnation of the Creator, the everlasting one, who is beyond man's comprehension."

When the Arghya was given unto Krishna, Sishupala, the Rajah of Chedi, arose in wrath and said: "It ill becomes thee, O Yudhishtira, to honour thus an uncrowned chieftain. Gathered about thee are ruling kings of highest fame. If the honour be due to age, then Vasudeva can claim it before his son; if it is due to the foremost rajah, then Drupada should be honoured; if it is due to wisdom, Drona is the most worthy; if it is due to holiness, Vyasa is the greatest. Drona's son hath more knowledge than Krishna, Duryodhana is peerless among younger men, Kripa is the worthiest priest, and Karna the greatest archer. For what reason should homage be paid unto Krishna, who is neither the holiest priest, the wisest preceptor, the greatest warrior, nor the foremost chieftain? To the shame of this assembly be it said that it doth honour the murderer of his own rajah, this cowherd of low birth."

So spake Sishupala, the tiger-hearted one, and terrible was his wrath. He hated Krishna, because that he had carried away by force the beautiful Rukmini, who had been betrothed unto himself, the mighty Rajah of Chedi.

Krishna then spoke. Calm was he of voice and demeanour, but his eyes were bright. Unto the rajahs he said: "Hear me, O ye princes and kings! The evil-tongued Sishupala is descended from a daughter of our race, and in my heart I have never sought to work ill against a kinsman. But once, when I went eastward, he sacked my sea-swept Dwarka and laid low its temple; once he broke faith with a rajah and cast him into prison; once he seized the consort of a king by

to attend the great sacrifice: their turrets were high, and they were swan-white and flecked with radiant gold. Silver and gold adorned the walls of the rooms, which were richly perfumed and carpeted and furnished to befit the royal guests.

Then the rajahs came to Indra-prastha in all their splendour and greeted mighty Yudhishtira. Those who were friends brought gifts, and those who had been subdued in battle brought tribute. White-haired and blind old Dhritarashtra came, and with him were Kripa and Bhishma and Vidura. Proud Duryodhana and his brethren came also, professing friendship, and Karna came with bow and spear and mace. Drona and his son, and their enemies Drupada and his son, were there also, and Balarama, Krishna's brother, and their father Vasudeva. And among many others were jealous Sishupala¹, King of Chedi², and his son, and both wore bright golden armour.

Many Brahmans assembled at Indra-prastha, and Krishna honoured them and washed their feet. The gifts that were given to these holy sages were beyond computation. In great numbers came men of every caste also; and all were feasted at banquets, so that the words "Take ye and eat" were heard continuously on every hand.

Now there were deep and smouldering jealousies among the assembled rajahs, and when the time came to honour him who was regarded as the greatest among them by presenting the Arghya³, their passions were set ablaze. First Bhishma spake forth and said that the honour was due to Krishna, the pious one, who was the noblest and greatest among them all. "Krishna," he

¹ *Pro.* nish-oo-pah'la.

² *Pro.* chay'dee.

³ A gift of fruit or flowers, like an offering to the image of a god.

said, "is the origin of all things; the universe came into being for him alone. He is the incarnation of the Creator, the everlasting one, who is beyond man's comprehension."

When the Arghya was given unto Krishna, Sishupala, the Rajah of Chedi, arose in wrath and said: "It ill becomes thee, O Yudhishtira, to honour thus an uncrowned chieftain. Gathered about thee are ruling kings of highest fame. If the honour be due to age, then Vasudeva can claim it before his son; if it is due to the foremost rajah, then Drupada should be honoured; if it is due to wisdom, Drona is the most worthy; if it is due to holiness, Vyasa is the greatest. Drona's son hath more knowledge than Krishna, Duryodhana is peerless among younger men, Kripa is the worthiest priest, and Karna the greatest archer. For what reason should homage be paid unto Krishna, who is neither the holiest priest, the wisest preceptor, the greatest warrior, nor the foremost chieftain? To the shame of this assembly be it said that it doth honour the murderer of his own rajah, this cowherd of low birth."

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² Pron. chay'dee.

³ A gift of fruit or flowers, like an offering to the image of a god.

Yudhishtira commanded his brothers to perform the funeral rites over the dead with every honour. So the body of Sishupala was burned and the oblation poured forth. Then his son was proclaimed Rajah of Chedi.

Thereafter the great sacrifice was performed with solemnity and in peace. Krishna, who had maintained the supremacy of Yudhishtira by slaying a dangerous and jealous rival, looked on benignly.

Holy water was sprinkled by the Brahmans, and all the monarchs made obeisance and honoured Yudhishtira; saying: "Thou hast extended the fame of thy mighty sire, Pandu, and thou art become even greater than he was. Thou hast graced with this sacrifice thine high station and fulfilled all our hopes. Now, O emperor over all, permit us to depart to our own homes, and bestow thy blessing upon us."

So one by one they took leave of Yudhishtira and went away, and the four Pandavas accompanied the greatest of them to the confines of their kingdoms. Krishna was the last to bid farewell.

Said Yudhishtira: "Unto thee I owe all things. Because thou wert here, O valorous one, I was able to perform the great sacrifice."

Krishna said: "Monarch of all! rule thou over thy people with a father's wisdom and care. Be unto them like rain which nourisheth the parched fields; be a shade in hot sunshine; be a cloudless heaven bending over all. Be thou ever free from pride and passion; ever rule with power and justice and holiness, O Yudhishtira."

So he spake from his chariot and then went his way, and Yudhishtira turned homeward with tear-dimmed eyes.

Now when Duryodhana had witnessed the triumph

force; and once he disguised himself as the husband of a chaste princess and deceived her. And I have suffered because of his sins, nor sought vengeance, because that he was of our own race. He hath even come after my consort Rukmini, and is worthy of death."

As he spoke, the faces of many rajahs grew red with shame and anger, but Sishupala laughed aloud and made answer: "I seek no mercy from Krishna, nor do I fear him."

Then Krishna thought of his bright, resistless discus, and immediately it was in his hand. In anger he spake forth and said: "Hear me, ye lords of earth! I have promised the pious mother of Sishupala to pardon a hundred sins committed by her son. And I have fulfilled my vow. But now the number is more than full, and I will slay him, O ye mighty rajahs, before your eyes."

Having spoken thus, Krishna flung the discus, and it struck Sishupala on the neck, so that his head was severed from his body. He fell down like to a cliff struck by the thunderbolt. Then the assembled rajahs beheld a great wonder, for the passion-cleansed soul of Sishupala issued from his body, beautiful as the sun in heaven, and went towards Krishna. Its eyes were like to lotus blooms, and its form like to a flame; and it adored Krishna and entered into his body.¹

The rajahs all looked on, silent and amazed, while thunder bellowed out of heaven, and lightning flashed, and rain poured down in torrents. Some grew angry, and laid hands on their weapons to avenge the death of Sishupala; others rejoiced that he had been slain; the Brahmans chanted the praises of Krishna.

¹ Krishna represented the worshippers of Vishnu, of whom he was an incarnation. Sishupala, who was reputed to have been born with three eyes, was an incarnation of Shiva. Rukmini was an incarnation of Lakshmi.

Yudhishtira commanded his brothers to perform the funeral rites over the dead with every honour. So the body of Sishupala was burned and the oblation poured forth. Then his son was proclaimed Rajah of Chedi.

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Now when Duryodhana had witnessed the triumph

of the Pandavas, his heart burned with jealous rage. He envied the splendour of the palaces at Indra-prastha; he envied the glory achieved by Yudhishtira. Well he knew that he could not overcome the Pandavas in open conflict, so he plotted with his brethren to accomplish their fall by artifice and by wrong.

As in after-time the wise Sanjaya said: "The gods first deprive of his reason that man unto whom they ultimately send disgrace and defeat".

But Duryodhana had to work the will of the Creator under the influence of fate, and it was doomed that the Pandavas should suffer for a time at his hands.

CHAPTER XV

The Great Gambling Match

Duryodhana's Plot—Shakuni the Gambler—Loaded Dice—Challenge to Yudhishtira—An Unequal Contest—Pandavas lose Kingdom and become slaves—Draupadi staked and Lost—How Duhshasana humbled her—Pandava Queen's Appeals—Treated as a Menial—Attempt to Disrobe her—Taunted by Karna—Blima's Terrible Vows—Alarming Omens—Pandavas regain Liberty—Second Gambling Match—Pandavas go into Exile.

Now Shakuni, Prince of Gandhara,¹ and brother of Dhritarashtra's queen, was renowned for his skill as a gambler. He always enjoyed good fortune because that he played with loaded dice. Duryodhana plotted with him, desiring greatly to subjugate the Pandavas, and Shakuni said: "Be advised by me. Yudhishtira loves the dice, although he knows not how to play. Ask him to throw dice with me, for there is no gambler who is my equal in the three worlds. I will put him to shame. I will win from him his kingdom, O bull among men."

Duryodhana was well pleased at this proposal, and he went before his blind father, the maharajah, and prevailed upon him to invite the Pandavas to Hastinapur for a friendly gambling match, despite the warnings of the royal counsellors.

Said Dhritarashtra: "If the gods are merciful, my sons will cause no dispute. Let it be as fate hath ordained. No evil can happen so long as I am near,

and Bhishma and Drona are near also. Therefore, let the Pandavas be invited hither as my son desireth."

So Vidura, who feared trouble, was sent unto Indra-prastha to say: "The maharajah is about to hold a great festival at Hastinapur, and he desires that Yudhishtira and his brethren, their mother Pritha and their joint wife Draupadi, should be present. A great gambling match will be played."

When Yudhishtira heard these words, he sorrowed greatly, for well he knew that dice-throwing was oftentimes the cause of bitter strife. Besides, he was unwilling to play Prince Shakuni, that desperate and terrible gambler. But he could not refuse the invitation of Dhritarashtra, for a true Kshatriya, disdain a challenge which he has to play with his peers.

It was now known that the Pandava brethren, with their mother and their joint wife Draupadi, journeyed to Hastinapur, in the splendour. Dhritarashtra and Bhishma and Drona and all the princes and ladies then they were received by Queen Gandhari and the wives of the Kaurava princes, and all the daughters-in-law of the blind maharajah. And all were so jealous of the beauty of Draupadi and the splendour of her attire.

The Pandava lords and ladies went unto the dwelling which had been prepared for them, and there they were visited in turn by the lords and ladies of Hastinapur.

On the day that followed, Yudhishtira and his brethren went together to the gambling match, which was held in a gorgeous pavilion, roofed with arching crystal and decorated with gold and lapis lazuli: it had a hundred doors and a thousand great columns, and it was richly carpeted. All the princes and great chieftains and warriors of the kingdom were gathered there. And

Prince Shakuni of Gandhari was there also with his false dice.

When salutations had passed, and the great company were seated, Shakuni invited Yudhishtira to play.

Said Yudhishtira: "I will play if mine opponent will promise to throw fairly, without trickery and deceit. Deceitful gambling is sinful, and unworthy a Kshatriya; there is no prowess in it. Wise men do not applaud a player who winneth by foul means."

Shakuni said: "A skilled gambler ever playeth with purpose to vanquish his opponent, as one warrior fighteth another less skilled than himself to accomplish his overthrow. Such is the practise in all contests; a man plays or fights to achieve victory. . . . But if thou art in dread of me, O Yudhishtira, and afraid that thou wilt lose, 'twere better if thou didst not play at all."

Said Yudhishtira: "Having been challenged, I cannot withdraw. I fear not to fight or to play with any man. . . . But first say who doth challenge and who is to lay stakes equally with me."

Then Duryodhana spoke, saying: "O rajah, I will supply jewels and gold and any stakes thou wilt of as great value as thou canst set down. It is for me that Shakuni, my uncle, is to throw the dice."

Said Yudhishtira: "This is indeed a strange challenge. One man is to throw the dice and another is to lay the stakes. Such is contrary to all practice. If, however, thou art determined to play in this fashion, let the game begin."

Well did the Rajah of Indra-prastha know then that the match would not be played fairly. But he sat down, notwithstanding, to throw dice with Shakuni.

At the first throw Yudhishtira lost; indeed, he lost at every throw on that fatal day. He gambled away all

his money and all his jewels, his jewelled chariot with golden bells, and all his cattle; still he played on, and he lost his thousand war elephants, his slaves and beautiful slave girls, and the remainder of his goods; and next, he staked and lost the whole kingdom of the Pandavas, save the lands which he had gifted to the Brahmans. Nor did he cease to play then, despite the advice offered him by the chieftains who were there. One by one he staked and lost his brethren; and he staked himself and lost also.

Said Shakuni: "You have done ill, Yudhishtira, in staking thine own self, for now thou hast become a slave; but if thou wilt stake Draupadi now and win, all that thou hast lost will be restored unto thee."

Yudhishtira said: "So be it. I will stake Draupadi."

At these words the whole company was stricken with horror. Vidura swooned, and the faces of Bhishma and Drona grew pallid; many groaned; but Duryodhana and his brethren rejoiced openly before all men.

Shakuni threw the dice, and Yudhishtira lost this the last throw. In this manner was Draupadi won by Duryodhana.

Then all the onlookers gazed one upon another in silence and wide-eyed. Karna and Duhsasana¹ and other young princes laughed aloud.

Duryodhana rose proudly and spake unto Vidura, saying: "Now hasten unto Draupadi and bid her to come hither to sweep the chambers with the other bondswomen."

Vidura was made angry, and answered him: "Thy words are wicked, O Duryodhana. Thou canst not command a lady of royal birth to become a household slave. Besides, she is not thy slave, because Yudhishtira

¹ From Sanskrit *duhsasana*.

did stake his own freedom before he staked Draupadi. Thou couldst not win aught from a slave who had no power to stake the princess."

But Duryodhana cursed Vidura, and bade one of his servants to bring Draupadi before him.

Said Vidura: "Duryodhana is this day deprived of his reason. Dishonesty is one of the doors to hell. By practising dishonesty Duryodhana will accomplish yet the ruin of the Kauravas."

The beautiful Draupadi was sitting at peace within the fair dwelling set apart for the Pandavas on the banks of the Ganges; its walls and towers were mirrored on the broad clear waters. Then suddenly, as a jackal enters stealthily the den of a lion, the menial sent by Duryodhana entered the palace and stood before high-born Draupadi.

Said this man: "O queen, the mighty son of Pandu hath played and lost; he hath lost all, even his reason, and he hath staked thee, and thou hast been won by Duryodhana. And now Duryodhana bids me to say that thou art become his slave, and must obey him like to other female slaves. So come thou with me, for thou must henceforth engage in menial work."

Draupadi was astounded when he spake these words, and in her anguish she cried: "Have I heard thee aright? Hath my husband, the king, staked and lost me in his madness? Did he stake and loose aught beside?"

Said the man: "Yudhishtira hath lost all his riches and his kingdom; he staked his brethren and lost them one by one; he staked himself and lost; and then he staked thee, O queen, and lost also. Therefore, come thou with me."

Draupadi rose in her pride and spoke angrily, saying: "If my lord did stake himself and become a slave, he

his money and all his jewels, his jewelled chariot with golden bells, and all his cattle; still he played on, and he lost his thousand war elephants, his slaves and beautiful slave girls, and the remainder of his goods; and next, he staked and lost the whole kingdom of the Pandavas, save the lands which he had gifted to the Brahmans. Nor did he cease to play then, despite the advice offered him by the chieftains who were there. One by one he staked and lost his brethren; and he staked himself and lost also.

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naked now, thou must follow me. Hast thou not become a slave, fairly staked and fairly won? Henceforth thou wilt serve among the other menials."

Trembling and faint, Draupadi was dragged through the streets by Duhsasana. When she stood before the elders and the chieftains in the pavilion she cried: "Forgive me because that I have come hither in this unseemly plight. . . ."

Bhishma and Drona and the other elders who were there hung their heads in shame.

Unto Duhsasana Draupadi said angrily: "Cease thy wickedness! Defile me no longer with unclean hands. A woman's hair is sacred."

Sacred indeed were the locks of the Pandava queen, for they had been sprinkled with water sanctified by mantras at the imperial sacrifice.

Weeping, she cried: "Hear and help me, O ye elders. You have wives and children of your own. Will you permit this wrong to be continued. Answer me now."

But no man spake a word.

Draupadi wept and said: "Why this silence? . . . Will no man among ye protect a sinless woman? . . . Lost is the fame of the Kauravas, the ancient glory of Bharata, and the prowess of the Kshatriyas! . . . Why will not the sons of Pandu protect their outraged queen? . . . And hath Bhishma lost his virtue and Drona his power? . . . Will Yudhishtira no longer defend one who is wronged? . . . Why are ye all silent while this deed of shame is done before you?"

As she spake thus, Draupadi glanced round the sons of Pandu one by one, and their hearts thirsted for vengeance. Bhishma's face was dark, Drona clenched his teeth, and Vidura, white and angry, gazed upon Duhsasana with amaze while he tore off Draupadi's veil and addressed

could not wager me, for a slave owns neither his own life nor the life of another. Speak, therefore, unto my husband these words, and unto Duryodhana say: 'Draupadi hath not been won'."

The man returned to the assembly and spake unto Yudhishtira the words which Draupadi had said, but he bowed his head and was silent.

Duryodhana was made angry by the defiant answer of the proud queen, and he said unto his brother Duhsasana: "The sons of Pandu are our slaves, and thy heart is without fear for them. Go thou to the palace and bid the princess, my humble menial, to come hither quickly."

Red-eyed and proud Duhsasana hastened to the palace. He entered the inner chambers and stood before Draupadi, who was clad in but a single robe, while her hair hung loosely.

Said the evil-hearted Kaurava: "O princess of Panchala with fair lotus eyes, thou hast been staked and lost fairly at the game of hazard. Hasten, therefore, and stand before thy lord Duryodhana, for thou art now his bright-eyed slave."

Draupadi heard and trembled. She covered her eyes with her hands before the hated Duhsasana; her cheeks turned pale and her heart sickened. Then suddenly she leapt up and sought to escape to an inner room. But the evil-hearted prince seized her by the hair, for he no longer feared the sons of Pandu, and the beautiful princess quivered and shook in her loose attire like to a sapling which is shaken by the storm wind. Crouching on her knees, she cried angrily, while tears streamed from her lotus eyes: "Begone! O shameless prince. Can a modest woman appear before strangers in loose attire?"

Said stern and cruel Duhsasana: "Even if thou wert

naked now, thou must follow me. Hast thou not become a slave, fairly staked and fairly won? Henceforth thou wilt serve among the other menials."

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her with foul words. When she looked towards the Kaurava brethren, Duhshana said: "Hail on whom darest thou to look now, O slave!"

Shakuni and Karna laughed to hear Draupadi called a slave, and they cried out: "Well spoken, well spoken!"

Duhshana endeavoured to strip the princess naked before the assembly; but Draupadi, in her distress, prayed aloud to Krishna, invoking him as the creator of all and the soul of the universe, and entreated him to help her. Krishna heard her, and multiplied her garments so that Duhshana was unable to accomplish his wicked purpose.

Karna spake to Draupadi and said: "'Tis not thy blame, O princess, that thou hast fallen so low. A woman's fate is controlled by her husband; Yudhishtira hath gambled thee away. Thou wert his, and must accept thy fate. Henceforward thou wilt be the slave of the Kaurava princes. Thou must obey them and please them with thy beauty. . . . 'Tis meet that thou shouldst now seek for thyself a husband who will love thee too well to stake thee at dice and suffer thee to be put to shame. . . . Be assured that no one will blame a humble menial, as thou now art, who looks with eyes of love upon great and noble warriors. Remember that Yudhishtira is no longer thy husband; he hath become a slave, and a slave can have no wife. . . . Ah! sweet Princess of Panchala, those whom thou didst choose at thy swayamvara have gambled and lost thee; their kingdom they have lost, and their power also."

At these words Bhima's bosom heaved with anger and with shame. Red-eyed he scowled upon Karna; he seemed to be the image of flaming Wrath. Unto Yudhishtira he spake grimly, saying: "If you hadst not staked our freedom and our queen, O king and elder

brother, this son of a charioteer would not have taunted us in this manner."

Yudhishtira bowed his head in shame, nor answered a word.

Arjuna reproved Bhima for his bitter words; but Pritha's mighty son, the slayer of Asuras, said: "If I am not permitted to punish the tormentor of Draupadi, bring me a fire that I may thrust my hands into it."

A deep uproar rose from the assembly, and the elders applauded the wronged lady and censured Duhsasana. Bhima clenched his hands and, with quivering lips, cried out:

"Hear my terrible words, O ye Kshatriyas. . . . May I never reach Heaven if I do not yet seize Duhsasana in battle and, tearing open his breast, drink his very life blood! . . ."

Again he spoke and said: "If Yudhishtira will permit me, I will slay the wretched sons of Dhritarashtra without weapons, even as a lion slays small animals."

Then Bhishma and Vidura and Drona cried out: "Forbear, O Bhima! Everything is possible in thee."

Duryodhana gloried in his hour of triumph, and unto the elder of the Pandava brethren spake tauntingly and said: "Yudhishtira, thou art spokesman for thy brethren, and they owe thee obedience. Speak and say, thou who dost ever speak truly, hast thou lost thy kingdom and thy brethren and thine own self? O Yudhishtira, hast thou lost even the beautiful Draupadi? And hath she, thy wedded wife, become our humble menial?"

Yudhishtira heard him with downcast eyes, but his lips moved not. . . . Then Karna laughed; but Bhishma, pious and old, wept in silence.

Then Duryodhana cast burning eyes upon Draupadi, and, baring his knee, invited her, as a slave, to sit upon it.

her with foul words. When she looked at her Kaurava brethren, Duhsasana said: "Hast thou to look now, O slave?"

Shakuni and Karna laughed to hear of a slave, and they cried out: "Well spoken,

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Karna spake to Draupadi and said: "Blame, O princess, that thou hast placed a woman's fate is controlled by her husband. I have gambled thee away. Thou wilt now accept thy fate. Henceforward thou art the property of the Kaurava princes. Thou must please them with thy beauty. . . . Thou shouldst now seek for thyself a husband. Thou hast staked thee too well to stake thee at dice and put to shame. . . . Be assured that I am not a humble menial, as thou now art. I have placed of love upon great and noble warriors. Yudhishtira is no longer thy husband. He is a slave, and a slave can have no wife. O Princess of Panchala, those who have gambled thy swayamvara have gambled thy freedom they have lost, and their wives are slaves."

At these words Bhima's eyes were filled with shame. Red-eyed Bhishma seemed to be the image of Yudhishtira. He spake grimly, "I have staked our freedom."

liberty now my lord and husband Yudhishtira. Having been a prince, it is not seemly that he should be called a slave."

Dhritarashtra said: "Thy wish is granted. Ask a second boon and blessing, O fair one. Thou dost deserve more than a single boon."

Said Draupadi: "Let Arjuna and Bhima and their younger brethren be set free also and allowed to depart now with their horses and their chariots and their weapons."

Dhritarashtra said: "So be it, O high-born princess. Ask yet another boon and blessing and it will be granted thee."

Said Draupadi: "I seek no other boon, thou generous monarch: I am a Kshatriya by birth, and not like to a Brahman, who craveth for gifts without end. Thou hast freed my husbands from slavery: they will regain their fortunes by their own mighty deeds."

Then the Pandava brethren departed from Hastinapur with Pritha and Draupadi, and returned unto the city of Indra-prastha.

The Kauravas were made angry, and Duryodhana remonstrated with his royal sire and said: "Thou hast permitted the Pandava princes to depart in their anger; now they will make ready to wage war against us to regain their kingdom and their wealth; when they return they will slay us all. Permit us, therefore, to throw dice with them once again. We will stake our liberty, and be it laid down that the side which loseth shall go into exile for twelve full years, and into concealment for a year thereafter. By this arrangement a bloody war may be averted."

Dhritarashtra granted his son's wish and recalled the Pandavas. So it came to pass that Yudhishtira sat down

once again to play with Shakuni, and once again Shakuni brought forth the loaded dice. Ere long the game ended, and Yudhishtira had lost.

Duhsasana danced with joy and cried aloud: "Now is established the empire of *Duryodhana*."

Said Bhima: "Be not too gladsome, O Duhsasana. Hear and remember my words: May I never reach Heaven or meet my sires until I shall drink thy blood!"

Then the Pandava princes cast off their royal garments and clad themselves in deerskins like humble mendicants. Yudhishtira bade farewell to Dhritarashtra and Bhishma and Kripa and Vidura, one by one, and he even said farewell to the Kaurava brethren.

Said Vidura: "Thy mother, the royal Pritha, is too old to wander with thee through forest and jungle. Let her dwell here until the years of your exile have passed away."

Yudhishtira spoke for his brethren and said: "Be it so, O saintly Vidura. Now bless us ere we depart, for thou hast been unto us like to a father."

Then Vidura blessed each one of the Pandava princes, saying: "Be saintly in exile, subdue your passions, learn truth in your sorrow, and return in happiness. May these eyes be blessed by beholding thee in Hastinapur once again."

Pritha wept over Draupadi and blessed her. Then the Princess of Panchala went forth with loose tresses; but ere she departed from the city she vowed a vow, saying: "From this day my hair will fall over my forehead until Bhima shall have slain Duhsasana and drunk his blood; then shall Bhima tie up my tresses while his hands are yet wet with the blood of Duhsasana."

The Pandava princes wandered towards the deep forest, and Draupadi followed them.

CHAPTER XVI

Second Exile of the Pandavas

The Gift of the Sun God—Life in the Jungle—Bhima and the Ape God—Flowers of Paradise—Draupadi's Complaint to Krishna—Reproved by Yudhishtira—Arjuna wrestles with the God Shiva—His Celestial Weapon—Visit to Indra's Heaven—Battle with Sea Giants—Sages in the Forest—Duryodhana captured by Gandharvas—Pandavas rescue him—His Desire to perish—The Rival Sacrifice—Karna's Vow—Adventure at Sacred Pond—Pandavas in Virata—Adventures of Brethren—The Cattle Raid—Kauravas defeated—Marriage of Arjuna's Son—End of Exile.

YUDHISHTHIRA lamented his fate to the Brahmans as he wandered towards the forest. "Our kingdom is lost to us," he said, "and our fortune; everything is lost; we depart in sorrow, and must live on fruits and roots and the produce of the chase. In the woods are many perils—many reptiles and hungry wild animals seeking their prey."

A Brahman advised the deposed rajah to call upon the sun god, and Yudhishtira prayed: "O sun, thou art the eye of the universe, the soul of all things that are; thou art the creator; thou art Indra, thou art Vishnu, thou art Brahma, thou art Prajapati, lord of creatures, father of gods and man; thou art fire, thou art Mind; thou art lord of all, the eternal Brahma."

Then Surya¹ appeared before Yudhishtira and gave unto him a copper pot, which was ever filled with food for the brethren.²

¹ The sun god.

² Like the "Pot of Worth" possessed by the Celtic Fionn-mac-Coul.

For twelve long years the Pandavas lived in the woods with their wife Draupadi, and Dharmya, the Brahman. Whatever food they obtained, they set apart a portion for the holy men and ate the rest. They visited holy shrines; they bathed in sacred waters; they performed their devotions. Ofttimes they held converse with Brahmins and sages, who instructed them in pious works and blessed them, and also promised them that their lost kingdom would be restored in the fullness of time.

They wandered in sunshine and in shade; they dwelt in pleasant places, amidst abundant fruits and surrounded by flowers. They suffered also from tempests and heavy rains, when their path would be torn by streams, and Draupadi would swoon, and all the brethren would be faint and weary and in despair. Then Bhima would carry them all on his back and under his arms.

The gods appeared unto the brethren during their exile. Dharma, god of wisdom and holiness, addressed Yudhishtira his son many questions, which he answered piously and well. Hanuman, son of Vayu, the wind god, was made manifest before Bhima. It chanced that the strong Pandava, who was also Vayu's son, was hastening on his way and went swift as the wind; the earth shook under him and trees fell down, and he killed at one touch of his foot tigers and lions and even great elephants that sought to obstruct his path.¹ Hanuman shrank to the size of an ape, but his tail spread out in such great proportions across Bhima's path, that he was compelled to stay his course and stand still. He spake to Bhima then and told the tale of Rama and Sita. Then he grew suddenly as lofty as Vindhya mountain and transported his brother, the

¹ Like the Celtic giant Caoilte, who went swifter than the March wind, and the Teutonic storm-giant Ecke, who gave chase to Dietrich in his character as Thoror (Thor).—See *Teutonic Myth and Legend*, Chapter xxviii.

Pandava, to the garden of Kuvera,¹ King of Yakshas, lord of treasure, who dwells in Mount Kailasa in the Himalayas; then Bhima procured sweet-scented flowers, which gave youth to those who had grown aged and turned grief into joy, and these he gave unto Draupadi.

Krishna came to visit the Pandavas in the forest, and Draupadi lamented before him, saying: "The evil-hearted Duryodhana dared to claim me for his slave. Fie! fie! upon the Pandavas because that they looked on in silence when I was put to shame. Is it not the duty of a husband to protect his wife? . . . These husbands of mine, who have the prowess of lions, saw me afflicted, nor lifted a hand to save."

Draupadi wept bitter tears from her exquisite coppery eyes, but Krishna at length comforted her, saying: "Thou wilt yet live to see the wives of those men who persecuted thee lamenting over their fallen husbands as they welter in their life blood. . . . I will help the Pandavas, and thou wilt be once again a queen over kings."

Krishna said to Yudhishtira: "Had I been at Dwaraka when thou wert called upon to visit Hastinapur, this unfair match would not have taken place, for I would have warned Dhritarashtra. But I was waging a war against demons. . . . What can I do, now that this disaster is accomplished? . . . It is not easy to confine the waters after the dam hath burst."

After Krishna returned to his kingdom, Draupadi continued to lament her fate. She said to Yudhishtira: "The sinful, evil-hearted Duryodhana hath a heart of steel. . . . O king, I lie on the ground, remembering my soft luxurious bed. I, who sit on a grass mat, cannot forget my chairs of ivory. I have seen thee in the court of

¹ Like the Teutonic elf king Laurin, whose wonderful rose garden is among the Tyrolean mountains.—*Teutonic Myth and Legend*.

monarchs; now thou art a beggar. I have gazed upon thee in thy silken robes, who art now clad in rags. . . . What peace can my heart know now, O king, remembering the things that have been? My heart is full of grief. . . . Doth not thy wrath blaze up, seeing thy brothers in distress and me in sorrow? How canst thou forgive thy cruel enemy? Art thou devoid of anger, Yudhishtira? . . . Alas! a Kshatriya who doth not act at the right moment—who forgiveth the foeman he should strike down, is the most despised of all men. The hour hath now come for thee to seek vengeance; the present is not a time for forgiveness."

Said the wise Yudhishtira: "Anger is sinful; it is the cause of destruction. He that is angry cannot distinguish between right and wrong. Anger slayeth one who should be revered; it doth reverence to one who should be slain. An angry man may commit his own soul to hell. Know thou that wise men control their wrath so as to achieve prosperity both in this world and in the next. A weak man cannot control his wrath; but men of wisdom and insight seek to subdue their passions, knowing that he who is angry cannot perceive things in their true perspective. None but ignorant people regard anger as equivalent to energy. . . . Because fools commit folly, should I who seek wisdom do likewise? . . . If wrongs were not righted except by chastisement, the whole world would speedily be destroyed, for anger is destruction; it maketh men to slay one another. O fair Draupadi! it is meet to be forgiving; one should forgive every wrong. He who is forgiving shall attain to eternal bliss; he who is foolish and cannot forgive is destroyed both in this world and in the next. Forgiveness is the greatest virtue; it is sacrifice; it is tradition; it is inspiration. Forgiveness, O beautiful one! is holiness; it

is Truth; it is Brahma. By forgiveness the universe is made steadfast. . . . The wise man who learns how to forgive attaineth to Brahma (the highest god). O Draupadi, remember thou the verses of the sage—

‘Let not thy wrath possess thee,
But worship peace with joy;
Who yieldeth to temptation
That great god will destroy’.

He who is self-controlled will attain to sovereignty, and the qualities of self-control are forgiveness and gentleness. O let me attain with self-control to everlasting goodness!”

Said Draupadi: “I bow down before the Creator and Ordainer of life and the three worlds, for my mind, it seems, hath been dimmed. By deeds men are influenced, for deeds produce consequences; by works are they set free. . . . Man can never gain prosperity by forgiveness and gentleness; thy virtue hath not shielded thee, O king; thou art following a shadow. . . . Men should not obey their own wills, but the will of the god who hath ordained all things. . . . Yet O, methinks, as a doll is moved by strings, so are living creatures moved by the lord of all; he doth play with them as a child with a toy. . . . Those who have done wrong are now happy, and I am full of grief and in sore distress. Can I praise thy god who permits of such inequality? What reward doth thy god receive when he alloweth Duryodhana to prosper—he who is full of evil; he who doth destroy virtue and religion? If a sin doth not rebound on the sinner, then a man’s might is the greatest force and not thy god, and I sorrow for those who are devoid of might.”

Yudhishtira made answer: “Alas! thy words are the words of an unbeliever. I do not act merely for the sake of reward. I give because it is right to give, and

monarchs; now thou art a beggar. I have gazed upon thee in thy silken robes, who art now clad in rags. . . . What peace can my heart know now, O king, remembering the things that have been? My heart is full of grief. . . . Doth not thy wrath blaze up, seeing thy brothers in distress and me in sorrow? How canst thou forgive thy cruel enemy? Art thou devoid of anger, Yudhishtira? . . . Alas! a Kshatriya who doth not act at the right moment—who forgiveth the foeman he should strike down, is the most despised of all men. The hour hath now come for thee to seek vengeance; the present is not a time for forgiveness."

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I sacrifice because it is my duty so to do. I follow in the paths of those who have lived wise and holy lives, because that my heart turneth toward goodness. I am no trader in goodness, ever looking for the fruits thereof. The man who doubteth virtue will be born among the brutes;¹ he will never attain to everlasting bliss. O do not, thou fair one, doubt the ancient religion of thy people! God will reward; he is the giver of fruits for deeds; virtue and vice bear fruits. . . . The wise are content with little in this world; the fools are not content although they receive much, because they will have no joy hereafter. . . . The gods are shrouded in mystery; who can pierce the cloud which covers the doings of the gods? Although thou canst not perceive the fruits of goodness, do not doubt thy religion or the gods. Let thy scepticism give room to faith. O do not slander the great god, but endeavour to learn how to know him. Turn not away from the Supreme One who giveth eternal life, O Draupadi."

Said Draupadi: "I do not slander my god, the lord of all, for in my sorrow I but rave. . . . But yet I hold that a man should act, lest by inaction he is censured. Without acts no one can live. He who believeth in chance and destiny and is inactive, liveth a life of weakness and helplessness which cannot last long. Success comes to him who acts, and success depends on time and circumstance. So hath a wise Brahman taught me."

Bhima then spoke, charging Yudhishthira with weakness, and pleading with him to wrest the sovereignty from Duryodhana: "O thou art like froth," he cried; "thou art unripe fruit! O king, strike down thine enemies! Battle is the highest virtue for a Kshatriya."

¹ To the next life in this world, according to the belief in transmigration of souls.

Said Yudhishthira: "Verily, my heart burneth because of our sufferings. But I have given my pledge to remain in exile, and it cannot be violated, O Bhīma. Virtue is greater than life and prosperity in this world; it is the way to celestial bliss."

Then they were all silent, and they pondered over these things.

Now the Pandavas had need of celestial weapons, for these were possessed by Drona and Bhishma and Karna. In time, therefore, the holy sage Vyasa appeared before Arjuna and bade him to visit Mount Kailasa, the high seat of the gracious and propitious god Shiva, the three-eyed, the blue-throated, and to perform penances there with deep devotion, so as to obtain gifts of arms. So Arjuna went his way, and when he reached the mountain of Shiva he went through great austerities: he raised his arms aloft and, leaning on naught, stood on his tiptoes; for food he ate at first withered leaves, then he fed upon air alone. Great was the fervour of his austerities, and from the ground smoke issued forth. The Rishis pleaded with Shiva, fearing disaster from the penances of Arjuna. Then the god assumed the form of a hunter and went towards Indra's warrior son, whom he challenged to single combat. First they fought with weapons; then they wrestled one with another fiercely and long, and in the end Arjuna was cast upon the ground and he swooned. When that brave Pandava regained consciousness he made a clay image of Shiva, prostrated himself and worshipped the gracious one, and made an offering of flowers. Soon afterwards he beheld his opponent wearing the garland he had given, and he knew that he had wrestled with Shiva himself. Arjuna fell down before him, and received from the god a celestial weapon named Pasupata. Then a great storm broke forth, and

the earth shook, and the spirit of the weapon stood beside Arjuna, ready to obey his will.

Next appeared Indra, king of gods, Varuna, god of waters, Yama, king of the dead, and Kuvera, lord of treasures, and they stood upon the mountain summit in all their glory; unto Arjuna they gave gifts of other celestial weapons.

Thereafter Indra transported his son to his own bright city, the celestial Swarga, where the flowers always bloom and sweet music is ever wafted on fragrant winds. There he beheld sea-born Apsaras, the heavenly brides of gods and heroes, and music-loving Gandharvas, who sang songs and danced merrily in their joy. And Urvashi, a fair Apsara of faultless form, with bright eyes and silken hair, looked with love upon Arjuna; but she sought in vain to subdue him, whereat she spoke scornfully, saying: "Kama, god of love, hath wounded me with his arrows, yet thou dost scorn me. For this, O Arjuna, thou wilt for a season live unregarded among women as a dancer and musician."

Arjuna was troubled, but Indra said: "This curse will work out for thy good."

Arjuna abode in Indra's fair city for the space of five years. He achieved great skill in music and in dance and song. And he was trained also to wield the celestial weapons which the gods had given unto him.

Now the demons and giants who are named the Daityas and Danavas were the ancient enemies of Indra. Certain of them there were who had their dwellings in the lowest division of the underworld beneath the floor of ocean, which is called Patala. And a day came when Arjuna waged war with them. He rode forth in Indra's great car, which went through the air like to a bird, and Matali was the driver. When he reached the shore of

the sounding sea, the billows rose against him like great mountains, and the waters were divided; he saw demon fish and giant tortoises, and vessels laden with rubies. But he paused not, for he was without fear. The mighty Arjuna was eager for battle, and he blew a mighty blast upon his war shell: the Daityas and Danavas heard him and quaked with terror.¹ Then the demons smote their drums and sounded their trumpets, and amidst the dread clamour the wallowing sea monsters arose and leapt over the waves against Indra's great son. But Arjuna chanted mantras; he shot clouds of bright arrows; he fought with his bright celestial weapons, and the furies were thwarted and beaten back. Then they sent fire against him and water, and they flung rocks like to great peaks; but he fought on until in the end he triumphed, and slew all that stood against him nor could escape.

Thereafter the valiant hero rode speedily towards the city of demons and giants which is named Hiranyapura. The women came out to lure him, calling aloud, and their voices were like the voices of cranes. He heard but paused not. All these evil giant women were driven before him; in confusion they fled, terrified by the clamour of Indra's celestial car and the driving of Matali, and their ear-rings and their necklaces fell from their bodies like to boulders tumbling and thundering adown mountain steeps.

Arjuna reached the city of Hiranyapura and entered it; and he gazed with wonder on mighty chariots with ten thousand horses, which were many-coloured like to gaily-plumaged peacocks, beautiful and stately and proud. And he wrecked the dwellings of the Daityas and Danavas.

¹ Like Dietrich von Bern, he assumes the character of the thunder god, and reminds us of Thor going eastward to battle against the Jotuns.

Indra praised his warrior son for his valour in overcoming the demons and giants of ocean, and he gave unto him a chain of gold, a bright diadem, and the war shell which gave forth a mighty blast like to thunder.¹

During the years that Arjuna had his dwelling in Indra's celestial city, Yudhishtira and his three younger brethren, with Draupadi and the priest Dhaumya, abode a time in the forest of Kamyaka. Great sages visited them there, and from one Yudhishtira obtained skill in dice. Others led the wanderers to sacred waters, in which they were cleansed of their sins, and they achieved great virtues. And the sages related unto them many tales of men and women who suffered and made self-sacrifices, undergoing long exiles and performing penances so as to attain to great wisdom and win favour from the gods.

Thereafter the exiles went northward towards the Himalayas, and at length they beheld afar off the dwelling of Kuvera, lord of treasure and King of Yakshas. They gazed upon palaces of crystal and gold; the high walls were studded with jewels, and the gleaming ramparts and turrets were adorned by dazzling streamers. They saw beauteous gardens of bright flowers, and soft winds came towards them laden with perfume; wonderful and fair were the trees, and they were vocal with the songs of birds.

Kuvera walked forth and spake words of wisdom unto Yudhishtira, counselling him to be patient and long-suffering, and to wait for the time and the place for displaying Kshatriya prowess.

The exiles wandered on, and one day, when they sighed for Arjuna, they beheld the bright car of Indra,

¹ For slaying a sea giant, the Celtic Finn-mac-Coul was awarded by the king of Erin the "Horn of Worth", which could be heard "over seven hills". Like Arjuna's war shell, it was evidently the "thunder horn".

and they worshipped Matali, the charioteer. Then Indra came with his hosts of Apsaras and Gandharvas, and when they had adored him, the god promised Yudhishthira that he would yet reign in splendour over all men.

Arjuna appeared, and he was received with rejoicing, and all the Pandavas returned together to Kamyaka. There they were visited by Markandeya, the mighty sage, whose life endures through all the world's ages, and he spake of the mysteries and all that had taken place from the beginning, and revealed unto them full knowledge of the Deluge.

Now while the Pandavas were enduring great suffering in the forest, Karna spake to Duryodhana and prevailed upon him to spy upon their misery. So Dhritarashtra's son went forth, as was the custom every three years, to inspect the cattle and brand the calves. And with him went Karna and many princes and courtiers, and also a thousand ladies of the royal household. When, however, they all drew nigh to the forest, they found that the Gandharvas and Apsaras, who, as it chanced, had descended to make merry there, would not permit the royal train to advance. Duryodhana sent messages to the Gandharva king, commanding him to depart with all his hosts; but the celestial spirits feared him not, and issued forth to battle. A great conflict was waged, and the Kauravas were defeated. Karna fled, and Duryodhana and many of his courtiers and all the royal ladies were taken prisoners.

It happened that some of Duryodhana's followers who took flight reached the place where the Pandavas were, and told them how their kinsmen had been overcome. Then Arjuna and Bhima and the two younger brethren went forth against the Gandharvas and fought with them until they were compelled to release the royal

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prisoners. In this manner was the proud Duryodhana humbled by those against whom he had cherished enmity.

Yudhishtira gave a feast to the Kauravas, and he called Duryodhana his "brother", whereat Duryodhana made pretence to be well pleased, although his heart was stung with deep mortification.

After this the sullen and angry Duryodhana resolved to end his life. His friends remonstrated with him, but he said: "I have naught to live for now, nor do I desire friendship, or wealth, or power, or enjoyment. Do not delay my purpose, but leave me each one, for I will eat no more food, and I will wait here until I die. Return therefore, unto Hastinapur and reverence and obey those who are greater than me."

Then Duryodhana made a mat of grass, and, having purified himself with water, sat down to wait for the end, clad in rags and absorbed in silent meditation.

But the Daityas and Danavas¹ desired not that their favourite rajah should thus end his life lest their power should be weakened, and they sent to the forest a strange goddess, who carried him away in the night. Then the demons, before whom Duryodhana was brought, promised to aid him in the coming struggle against the Pandavas, and he was comforted thereat, and abandoned his vow to die in solitude. So he returned speedily unto Hastinapur and resumed his high position there.

Soon afterwards, when the princes and the elders sat in council with the maharajah, wise old Bhishma praised the Pandava princes for their valour and generosity, and advised Duryodhana to offer them his friendship, so that the kinsmen might ever afterwards live together in peace. Duryodhana made no answer, and, smiling bitterly, rose up and walked out of the council chamber. Bhishma

¹ Demons and giants.

was made angry thereat, and departed also and went unto his own house.

Then Duryodhana sought to rival the glory of Yudhishtira by holding an Imperial sacrifice. Duhsasana, with evil heart, sent messengers unto Yudhishtira, inviting him to attend with his brethren; but Yudhishtira said: "Although this great sacrifice will reflect honour on all the descendants of King Bharata, and therefore upon me and my brethren, I cannot be present because our years of exile have not yet come to an end."

He spoke calmly and with dignity, but Bhima was made angry, and exclaimed: "Messengers of Duryodhana, tell thy master that when the years of exile are over, Yudhishtira will offer up a mighty sacrifice with weapons and burn in consuming flames the whole family of Dhritarashtra."

Duryodhana received these messages in silence. And when the sacrifice, which was called Varshava, was held, Karna said unto Duryodhana: "When thou has slain the Pandavas and canst hold thy Rajasuya¹, I will be present also to do homage unto thee."

Then Karna took a vow and said: "I will neither eat venison nor wash my feet² until I have slain Arjuna."

Spies hastened unto the Pandavas and related all that had taken place at the sacrifice, and also the words which Karna had spoken. When Yudhishtira heard of the terrible vow which Karna had vowed, he sorrowed greatly, for he knew that a day must come when Arjuna and Karna would meet in deadly conflict.

One day thereafter Surya, god of the sun, warned

¹ Dhritarashtra being still alive and the Pandavas having refused to attend, Duryodhana was enabled, as he desired, to perform the greater sacrifice.

² A ceremony very rare out of purification before prayer. Karna thus keeps, and his soul's sin here to be atoned upon his death.

Karna that Indra had resolved to divest him of his celestial armour and ear-rings. "But," said Surya, "thou canst demand in exchange a heavenly weapon which hath power to slay gods and demons and mortal men."

So it came that Indra stood before Karna, disguised as a Brahman, and asked for his armour and ear-rings. Having vowed to give unto the Brahmans whatsoever they might ask of him, Karna took off his armour and ear-rings and gave them unto the king of the gods, from whom he demanded in exchange an infallible weapon. Indra granted his request, but smiled¹ and went upon his way, knowing well that the triumph of the Pandavas was now assured.

It chanced that one day after this that Jayadratha², Rajah of Sindhu, passed through the wood when the Pandavas had gone a-hunting. He beheld Draupadi with eyes of love, and, despite her warnings, carried her away in his chariot.

When the Pandavas returned and were told by a bond-maiden what had taken place, they set out in pursuit of the Rajah of Sindhu, who left his chariot when they drew nigh, and concealed himself in a thicket.

Bhima then said unto Yudhishthira: "Return now with Draupadi and our brethren. Although the rajah should seek refuge in the underworld, he will not escape my vengeance."

But Yudhishthira: "Remember, O Bhima, that although Jayadratha hath committed a grievous sin, he is our kinsman, for he hath married the sister of Duryodhana."

Draupadi said: "He is worthy of death, for he is the

¹ The expression is used in the Sanskrit text to denote a smile which is full of scorn and contempt.

² The name is also written Jayadratha.

worst of kings and the vilest of men. Have not the sages said that he who carries off the wife of another in times of peace must certainly be put to death."

When Bhima found Jayadratha, he cast him down and cut off his hair except five locks; then the strong warrior promised to spare the rajah's life if he would do homage to Yudhishthira and declare himself his slave.

So the Rajah of Sindhu had to prostrate himself before Yudhishthira as a humble menial. Thereafter he departed in his shame and went unto his own country.

When the twelfth year of exile was nigh to an end, the Pandava brethren bethought them to leave the forest. But ere they went a strange and dread adventure threatened them with dire disaster. It chanced that a stag carried away upon its antlers the twigs with which a Brahman was wont to kindle his holy fire. The Brahman appealed to Yudhishthira to pursue the animal, and the Pandavas endeavoured in vain to kill it or recover the sacred twigs. Weary with the chase, they at length sat down to rest. They were all athirst, and one of them climbed a banyan tree to look for signs of water, for birds ever flutter over pools. When it was discovered that a pond was nigh, Yudhishthira sent Nakula towards it. The young man approached the water, and ere he stooped he heard a Voice which said: "Answer thou what I shall ask of thee ere thou dost drink or draw water."

But Nakula's thirst was greater than his fear, and he drank of the waters; then he fell dead.

Sahadeva followed him, wondering why his brother tarried. He too gazed greedily upon the pool, and he too heard the Voice, but heeded not and drank; and he fell dead also.

Arjuna next went towards the water. The Voice spake to him, and he answered with anger: "Who art

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¹ *Smiles* in such circumstances carried with it fatal consequences.

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thou that wouldst hinder me thus? Reveal thyself, and mine arrows will speak to thee."

Then he drew his bow, and his shafts flew thick and fast as raindrops. But his valour was as naught, for when he drank he also fell dead like the others. Bhima followed him, and stooped and drank, unheeding the Voice, and he was stricken down like to Arjuna and Nakula and Sahadeva.

At length, wise Yudhishtira approached the pond. He beheld his brethren lying dead, and sorrowed over them. Then, as he drew nigh to the water, the Voice spake once again, and he answered it, saying: "Who art thou?"

The Voice said: "I am a Yaksha. I warned thy brethren not to drink of this water until they had answered what I should ask of them, but they disregarded my warning and I laid them in death. If thou wilt answer my questions thou canst, however, drink here nor be afraid."

Said Yudhishtira: "Speak and I will answer thee."

The Voice said: "Who maketh the sun to rise? Who keepeth him company? Who maketh the sun to go down? In whom is the sun established?"

Said Yudhishtira: "Brahma maketh the sun to rise; the gods accompany him; Dharma maketh the sun to set; in truth is the sun established."

The Voice said: "What sleepeth with open eyes? What moveth not after birth? What is that which hath no heart? What is that which swelleth of itself?"

Said Yudhishtira: "A fish doth sleep with open eyes; an egg moveth not after birth; a stone hath no heart; a river swelleth of itself."

The Voice said: "What maketh The Way? What

is called Water? What is called Food? What is called Poison?"

Said Yudhishtira: "They that are pious make The Way; space is called water; the cow is food¹; a request is poison."

The Voice said: "Who is spoken of as the unconquered enemy of man? What is spoken of as the enemy's disease? Who is regarded as holy? Who is regarded as unholy?"

Said Yudhishtira: "Man's unconquered enemy is anger, and his disease is covetousness; he who seeketh after the good of all is holy; he who is selfishly cold is unholy."

The Voice said: "Who are worthy of eternal torment?"

Said Yudhishtira: "He who sayeth unto the Brahman whom he hath asked to his house, I have naught to give; he who declareth the Vedas to be false; he who is rich and yet giveth naught to the poor."

Many such questions did the Voice address to wise Yudhishtira, and he answered each one patiently and with knowledge. Then the Yaksha revealed himself in the form of Dharma, god of wisdom and justice, for behold! he was the celestial sire of Yudhishtira. Unto his son he granted two boons; and Yudhishtira desired that his brethren should be restored to life, and that they should all have power to remain unrecognized by anyone in the three worlds for the space of a year.

Ere the Pandavas left the forest, Yudhishtira invoked the goddess Durga², giver of boons, saying: "O slayer of

¹ Babu P. C. Roy comments on this head: "The cow is the only food in this sense. The cow gives milk. The milk gives butter. The butter is used in *Homa* (the offering). The *Homa* is the cause of the clouds. The clouds give rain. The rain makes the seeds to sprout forth and produce food."

² A form of the goddess Kali, wife of Shiva.

*the Buffalo-Asura, thou art worshipped by the gods, for thou art the protector of the three worlds. Chief of al-
deities, protect thou and bless thou us. Confer victory
upon us, and help us in our distress."*

The goddess heard Yudhishtira, and confirmed the promise of Dharma that the Pandava brethren and Draupadi would remain unrecognized during the thirteenth and last year of their exile.

Then the wanderers concealed their weapons in a tree, and went together towards the city of Virata¹ so that they might conceal themselves. According to the terms of banishment, they would have to spend a further twelve years in the jungle if the Kauravas discovered their whereabouts.

The Pandavas found favour in the eyes of the rajah. Yudhishtira became his instructor in the art of playing with dice, because he was wont to lose heavily. Bhima was made chief cook. Arjuna, attired as a eunuch, undertook to teach dancing and music to the ladies of the harem. Nakula was given care of horses, and Sahadeva of kine. The queen was drawn towards Draupadi, who offered to become a bondwoman on condition that she should not have to wash the feet of anyone, or eat food left over after meals; and on these terms she was engaged. The queen feared that Draupadi's great beauty would attract lovers and cause dispeace; but the forlorn woman said that she was protected by five Gandharvas, and was without fear.

Bhima soon won much renown by reason of his matchless strength. At a great festival he overcame and slew a wrestler from a far country who was named Jimûta, and he received many gifts. The rajah took great pride in him, and was wont to take him to the

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apartments of the women, where he wrestled with caged tigers and lions and bears, slaying each one at desire with a single blow. Indeed, all the brothers were well loved by the monarch because of their loyal services.

It chanced that the queen's brother, Kichaka¹, a mighty warrior and commander of the royal army, was smitten with love for beautiful Draupadi, and at length he sought to carry her away. But one night Bhima waited for him when he came stealthily towards Draupadi, and after a long struggle the strong Pandava slew him. Then Bhima broke all this prince's bones and rolled up his body in a ball of flesh.

Great was the horror of Kichaka's kinsmen when they discovered what had happened, and they said: "No man hath done this awful deed; the Gandharvas have taken vengeance."

In their wrath they seized Draupadi, to burn her in the pyre with the body of Kichaka; but Bhima disguised himself and went to her rescue, and he scattered her tormentors in flight, killing many with a great tree which he had uprooted.

The rajah was terror-stricken, and spake unto the queen, and the queen thereafterwards asked Draupadi to depart from Virata. But the wife of the Pandava begged to remain in the royal service yet a time, and she said that her Gandharva protectors would save her. The rajah in his greatest hour of peril, which, she said, was already nigh to him. So the queen bore her and Draupadi tarried there.

Soon afterwards the Rajah of Trigartia, hearing that the mighty Kichaka was dead, plotted with the Kaushalya, Indra-prastha to attack the city of Virata with Pandava. Duryodhana agreed to aid him.

Rajah of Trigartta invaded the kingdom from the north while the Kauravas marched against Virata from the south.

It came to pass that on the last day of the thirteenth year of the Pandavas' exile the first raid took place from the north, and many cattle were carried off. Yudhishthira and Bhima, with Nakula and Sahadeva, offered to give their help when it became known that the Rajah of Virata had been captured by his enemies. The Pandavas went forth to rescue the monarch, and they routed the raiders and rescued their prisoner; they also seized upon the Rajah of Trigartta, and forced him to submit with humility to his rival ere he was allowed to return to his own city.

Meanwhile the Kauravas had advanced from the south. Uttar¹, son of the Rajah of Virata, went against them, and Arjuna was his charioteer. When the young man, however, beheld his enemies, he desired to flee, but his driver compelled him by force to remain in the chariot.

Then Arjuna procured his own weapons from the tree in which they were concealed. Thus, fully armed, he rode against the Kauravas, who said: "If this be Arjuna, he and his brethren must go into exile for another twelve years."

Bhishma said: "The thirteenth year of concealment is now ended."

The Kauravas, however, persisted that Arjuna had appeared ere the full time was spent.

Indra's great son advanced boldly. Suddenly he blew his celestial war shell, and all the Kauravas were stricken with fear, and they swooned and lay on the field like men who slept. Arjuna forbore to slay them, and he commanded Uttar to take possession of their royal attire.

Then the great archer of the Pandavas returned to the city with the rajah's son.

Now when the monarch discovered how Arjuna had served him by warding off the attack of the Kauravas, he offered the brave Pandava his daughter, Uttara, for a bride; but Arjuna said: "Let her be given unto my son."

It was then that the Pandava brethren revealed unto the Rajah of Virata who they were. All those who had assembled in the palace rejoiced greatly and honoured them.

To the marriage of Abhimamju, son of Arjuna and Subhadra, came many great rajahs. Krishna came with his brother Balarama, and the Rajah Drupada came with his son Dhrishta-dyumna.

Now the Rajah of Virata resolved to aid Yudhishtira in obtaining back his kingdom from the Kauravas, who protested that their kinsmen had been discovered ere yet the complete term of exile was ended.

Shakuni, the cunning gambler, and the vengeful Karna supported the proud and evil-hearted Duryodhana in refusing to make peace with the Pandava brethren despite the warnings of the sages who sat around the Maharajah Dhritarashtra.

CHAPTER XVII

Defiance of Duryodhana

The Council at Virata—Speeches of Kings and Princes—Army to be raised for the Pandavas—Krishna's Attitude—His Army on one side, Himself on the other—Ambassador visits Kauravas—Pandavas invited to Hastinapur—A Deadlock—Krishna visits Hastinapur—Elders counsel Pandavas—Duryodhana refuses to Yield—Plot to seize Krishna—A Revelation of Divine Power—Krishna's Interview with Karna—Pritha informs Karna of his Birth—Karna refuses to desert Duryodhana—His Resolution and Promise.

ERE the wedding guests departed from Virata, after merrymaking and song and dance, the elders and princes and chieftains assembled in the council chamber. Drupada was there with his son, and Krishna with his brother Balarama and Satyaki his kinsman, and all the Pandava brethren were there also, and many others both valiant and powerful. Bright and numerous as the stars were the gems that glittered on the robes of the mighty warriors. For a time they spoke kindly greetings one to another, and jested and made merry. Krishna sat pondering in silence, and at length he arose and spoke saying:

"O rajahs and princes, may your fame endure forever! Thou knowest well that Yudhishtira was deprived of his kingdom by the evil trickster Shakuni. He hath endured twelve years of exile, and hath served like his brethren, as a humble menial for a further year in the palace of the Rajah of Virata. After long suffering Yudhishtira desires peace; his heart is without anger,

although he hath endured great shame. The heart of Duryodhana, however, still burns with hate and jealous wrath; still, as in his youth, he desires to work evil by deceit against the Pandava brethren. Now, consider well, O ye monarchs, what Yudhishtira should do. Should he call many chieftains to his aid and wage war to punish his ancient foes? Or should he send friendly messengers to Duryodhana, asking him to restore the kingdom which he still continues to possess?"

Balarama then spoke and said: "Ye pious rajahs! ye have heard the words of my brother, who loveth Yudhishtira. It is true, indeed, that the Kauravas have wronged the Pandavas. Yet I would counsel peace, so that this matter may be arranged between kinsmen. Yudhishtira hath brought his sufferings upon his own head. He was unwise to play with cunning Shakuni, and also to continue playing, despite the warnings of the elders and his friends. He hath suffered for his folly. Now let a messenger be sent to Duryodhana, entreating him to restore the throne unto Yudhishtira. I do not advise war. What hath been gambled away cannot be restored in battle."

Next arose Satyaki, the kinsman of Krishna. He said: "O Balarama, thou hast spoken like to a woman. Thou remindest me that weaklings are sometimes born to warriors, like to barren saplings sprung from sturdy trees. Timid words come from timid hearts. Proud monarchs heed not counsel so weakly as thine. O Balarama! canst thou justify Duryodhana and blame the pious-hearted and gracious Yudhishtira? If it had chanced that Yudhishtira while playing with his brethren had been visited by Duryodhana, who, having thrown the dice, achieved success, then the contest would have been fair in the eyes of all men. But Duryodhana plotted to ruin his kins-

man, and invited him to Hastinapur to play with evil-hearted Shakuni, who threw loaded dice. But this is ended. Yudhishthira hath fulfilled his obligation: his exile is past, and he is entitled to his kingdom. Therefore, should he beg for that which is his own? Kshatriya begs of no man; what is refused him he seeks in battle at all times. . . . Duryodhana still clings to Yudhishthira's kingdom, despite the wise counsel of Bhishma and Drona. Remember, O Balarama, it is sinful to slay one's enemies, but it is shameful to shrink from them. I now declare my advice to be that we should give the Kauravas an opportunity to resign the throne of Yudhishthira; if they hesitate to do so, then let the Pandavas secure justice on the battlefield."

Drupada, Rajah of Panchala, then arose and said: "Ye monarchs, I fear that Satyaki hath spoken truth. The Kauravas are a stubborn people. Methinks it is useless to entreat Duryodhana, whose heart is consumed with greed. It is vain to plead with Dhritarashtra, who is but as clay in the hands of his proud son. Bhishma and Drona have already counselled in vain. Karna thirsts for war, and Duryodhana intrigues with him and also with the false and cunning Shakuni. Methinks it were idle to follow the advice of Balarama. Duryodhana will never yield up what he now possesseth, nor doth he desire peace. If we should send to him an ambassador who will speak mild words, he will think that we are weak and become more boastful and arrogant than heretofore. My advice is that we should gather together a great army without delay: the rajahs will side with him who asks first. Meanwhile let us offer peace and friendship unto Duryodhana: my family priest will carry our message. If Duryodhana is willing to give up the kingdom . . .

Yudhishtira, there will be peace; if he scorns our friendship, he will find us ready for war."

Krishna again addressed the assembly and said: "Drupada hath spoken wisely. The Pandavas would do well to accept his counsel. If Duryodhana will agree to restore the raj unto Yudhishtira, there will be no strife or bloodshed. . . . You all know that the Pandavas and Kauravas are my kinsmen; know also that they are equally dear unto me. . . . I will now go hence. When ye send out messengers of war, let them enter my kingdom last of all."

After Krishna had returned home, he was visited by Duryodhana and Arjuna, for both parties desired greatly his help in the war. He spake to the rival kinsmen and said: "Behold, I stand before you as in the balance; I have put myself on one side, and all my army is on the other. Choose now between you whether you desire me or my forces. I shall not fight, but will give advice in battle."

Then Duryodhana asked for the army, but Arjuna preferred to have Krishna alone. And Krishna promised to be Arjuna's charioteer.

Duryodhana sought to prevail upon Balarama to aid him, but Krishna's brother said: "I have no heart for this war. I spake to Krishna in thy favour, but he answered me not. Well, thou knowest that thou hast wronged Yudhishtira, and that it would well become thee to act justly in this matter. Do thy duty, and thy renown will be great."

Duryodhana departed in sullen anger from Balarama.

In time Drupada's priest appeared in the city of Hastinapur, and the elders and princes sat with Dhritarashtra to hear his message. Said the Brahman: "Thus speaketh the Pandavas—'Pandu and Dhritarashtra were

brothers: why, therefore, should Dhritarashtra's sons possess the whole kingdom, while the sons of Pandu are denied inheritance? Duryodhana hath ever worked against his kinsman. He invited them to a gambling match to play with loaded dice, and they lost their possessions and had to go into exile like beggars. Now they have fulfilled the conditions, and are prepared to forget the past if their raj is restored to them. If their rightful claim is rejected, then Arjuna will scatter the Kauravas in battle."

Bhishma said: "What thou hast said is well justified, but it is wrong to boast regarding Arjuna. It would be wise of thee not to speak of him in such manner again."

Angrily rose Karna and said: "If the Pandavas have suffered, they are themselves to blame. It is but fitting that they should plead for peace, for they are without followers. If they can prove their right to possession, Duryodhana will yield; but he will not be forced by vain threatenings, or because the Rajahs of Panchala and Virata support them. O Brahman! tell thou the Pandavas that they have failed to fulfil their obligations, for Arjuna was beheld by us before the thirteenth year of banishment was completed. Let them return to a jungle for another term, and then come hither and submit to Duryodhana and beg for his favours."

Said Bhishma: "Thou didst not boast in this manner, O Karna, when Arjuna opposed thee at the Virata cattle raid. Remember that Arjuna is still powerful. If war comes, he will trample thee in the dust."

Dhritarashtra reproved Karna for his hasty speech and said unto Bhishma: "He is young and unaccustomed to debate; be not angry with him."

Then the blind old monarch sent his minister and charioteer, Sanjaya, to the Pandavas to speak thus: "I

you desire to have peace, come before me and I will do justice. Except wicked Duryodhana and hasty Karna all who are here are well disposed to you."

When Sanjaya reached the Pandavas, he was astonished to behold that they had assembled together a mighty army. He greeted the brethren and delivered his message.

Said Yudhishtira: "We honour Dhritarashtra, but fear that he has listened to the counsel of his son Duryodhana, who desires to have us in his power. The maharajah offers us protection, but not the fulfilment of our claims."

Krishna then spake, saying: "The Pandavas have assembled a mighty army, and cannot reward these soldiers unless they receive their raj. It is not yet too late to make peace. Deliver unto the Kauravas, O Sanjaya, this message: 'If you seek peace, you will have peace; if you desire war, then let there be war.'"

Ere Sanjaya left, Yudhishtira spoke to him and said: "Tell thou Duryodhana that we will accept that portion of the raj which we ourselves have conquered and settled: he can retain the rest. My desire is for peace."

Many days went past, and the Pandavas waited in vain for an answer to their message. Then Yudhishtira spake to Krishna, saying: "We have offered to make peace by accepting but a portion of our kingdom, yet the Kauravas remain silent."

Said Krishna: "I will now journey unto Hastinapur and address the maharajah and his counsellors on thy behalf."

Yudhishtira said: "Mayst thou secure peace between kinsmen."

Then Draupadi entered and, addressing Krishna, said:

"Yudhishtira is too generous towards the Kauravas : offering to give up part of his kingdom unto them. He entreateth them overmuch, as well, to grant him that which belongs not unto them. If the Kauravas wage war, my sire and many other rajahs will assist the Pandavas. . . . Oh! can it be forgotten how Duhshasan dragged me by the hair to the Gambling Pavilion and how I was put to shame before the elders and the princes?" . . .

She wept bitterly, and Krishna pitied her. "Why do you sorrow thus?" he asked with gentle voice. "The time is drawing nigh when all the Kauravas will be laid low, and their wives will shed tears more bitter than thine that fall now, O fair one."

Messengers who arrived at Hastinapur announced the coming of Krishna. Wise Vidura counselled that he should be welcomed in state, whereupon Duryodhana proclaimed a public holiday, and all the people rejoiced, and decorated the streets with streamers and flowers.

Vidura was well pleased, and he said to Duryodhana: "Thou hast done well. But these preparations are in vain if thou art unwilling to do justice unto the Pandavas."

Duryodhana was wroth, and said: "I will give naught except what they can win in battle. If the success of the Pandavas depends upon Krishna, then let us seize Krishna and put him in prison."

Dhritarashtra was horror-stricken, and cried out: "Thou canst not thus treat an ambassador, and especially an ambassador like unto Krishna."

Bhishma rose up and said: "O maharajah, thy son desireth to work evil and bring ruin and shame upon us all. Methinks disaster is not now afar off."

So saying, he departed unto his own house, and Vidura did likewise.

All the Kauravas went forth to meet the royal ambassador save Duryodhana, who scarcely looked upon Krishna when he arrived at the palace.

Krishna went to the house of Vidura, and there he saw Pritha, who wept and said: "How fares it with my sons, whom I have not beheld for fourteen years? How fares it with Draupadi? In sorrow have I heard of their sufferings in desolate places. Ah! who can understand mine own misery, for every day is full of weariness and grief unto me?"

Said Krishna: "Be comforted, O widow of Pandu! Thy sons have many allies, and ere long they will return in triumph to their own land."

Thereafter Krishna went to the house of Duryodhana, who sat haughtily in the feasting chamber. At length Dhritarashtra's son spake unto his kinsman, who ate naught. He said: "Why art thou unfriendly towards me?"

Said Krishna: "I cannot be thy friend until thou dost act justly towards thy kinsmen, the Pandavas."

When Krishna went again to the house of Vidura, the aged counsellor said to him: "'Twere better if thou hadst not come hither. Duryodhana will take no man's advice. When he speaketh he doth expect all men to agree with him."

Said Krishna: "It is my desire to prevent bloodshed. I came to Hastinapur to save the Kauravas from destruction, and I will warn them in the council chamber on the morrow. If they will heed me, all will be well; if they scorn my advice, then let their blood be upon their own heads."

When the princes and the elders sat with Dhrita-

rashtira in the council chamber, Narada and other great Rishis appeared in the heavens and were invited to come down and share in the deliberations, and they came down.

Krishna arose, and in a voice like thunder spake forth, saying: "I have come hither not to seek war, but to utter words of peace and love. O maharajah, let not your heart be stained with sin. Thy sons have wronged their kinsmen, and a danger threatens all: it approacheth now like an angry comet, and I can behold kinsmen slaying kinsmen, and many noble lords laid in the dust. All of you here gathered together are already in the clutch of death. O Dhritarashtra, man of peace, stretch forth thine hand and avert the dread calamity which is about to fall upon thy house. Grant unto the Pandavas their rightful claim, and thy reign will close in glory unsurpassed and in blessed peace. . . . What if all the Pandavas were slain in battle! Would their fall bring thee joy? Are they not thine own brother's children? . . . But, know thou, the Pandavas are as ready for war as they are eager for peace; and if war comes, it will be polluted with the blood of these thy sons. O gracious maharajah, let the last years of thy life be peaceful and pleasant, so that thou mayst be blessed indeed."

Dhritarashtra wept and said: "Fain would I do as thou hast counselled so wisely, O Krishna, but Duryodhana, my vicious son, will not listen to me or obey, nor will he give heed unto his mother, nor to Vidura, nor unto Bhishma."

Next Bhishma spoke, and he addressed Duryodhana, saying: "'Twould be well with thee if thou wouldst follow the advice of Krishna. Thou art evil-hearted and a wrongdoer; thou art the curse of our family; thou takest pleasure in disobeying thy royal sire and in scorn-

ing to be guided by Krishna and Vidura. Soon thy sire will be bereft of his kingdom because of thy deeds; thy pride will bring death to thy kinsmen. Hear and follow my advice; do not bring eternal sorrow to thine aged parents."

Duryodhana heard these words in anger, but was silent.

Then Drona spake to him and said: "I join with Bhishma and Krishna in making appeal unto thee. Those who advise thee to make peace are thy friends; those who counsel war are thine enemies. Be not too certain of victory; tempt not the hand of vengeance; leave the night-black road of evil and seek out the road of light and well-doing, O Duryodhana."

Next Vidura rose up. He spoke with slow, gentle voice, and said: "Thou hast heard words of wisdom, O Duryodhana. . . . I sorrow deeply in this hour. My grief is not for thee, but for thine aged sire and thine aged mother, who will fall into the hands of thine enemies; my grief is for kinsmen and friends who must die in battle, and for those who will thereafter be driven forth as beggars, friendless and without a home. The few survivors of war will curse the day of thy birth, O Duryodhana."

Again Bhishma spoke. He praised the valour of the Pandavas, and said: "It is not yet too late to avoid calamity. The field of battle is still unstained by the blood of thousands; thine army hath not yet met the arrows of death, O Duryodhana. Ere it is too late, make thy peace with thy kinsmen, the Pandavas, so that all men may rejoice. Banish evil from thine heart for ever; rule the whole world with the heirs of Pandu."

Dhritarashtra still wept. . . . The Rishis counselled peace like the elders.

Then angry Duryodhana spoke, while his eyes burn bright and his brows hung darkly, and said: "Krishna counsels me to be just, yet he hateth me and loveth the Pandavas. Bishma scowls upon me, and Vidura and Drona look coldly on; my sire weeps for my sins. What have I done that ye, O elders, should turn my sire's affection from me? If Yudhishtira loved gambling and staked and lost his throne and freedom, am I to blame? If he played a second time after being set at liberty, and became an exile, why should he now come a robber? Pallid and inconstant is the star of the Pandavas' destiny: their friends are few, and feeble their army. Shall we, who fear not Indra even, be threatened and browbeaten by the weak sons of Pandu? No warrior lives who can overcome us. A Kshatriya fears no foeman; he may fall in battle, but he will never yield. So have the sages spoken. . . . Hear me, my kinsmen all! My sire gifted Indra-prastha to the Pandavas in a moment of weakness. Never, so long as I and my brother live, will they possess it again. Never again will the kingdom of Maharajah Dhritarashtra be severed in twain. It has been united, and so will remain for ever. My words are firm and plain. So tell thou the Pandavas, O Krishna, that they ask in vain for territory. Nor town nor village will they again possess without my consent. I swear by the gods that I will never humble myself before the Pandavas."

Said Krishna: "How canst thou speak in such a manner, O Duryodhana? How canst thou pretend that thou didst never wrong thy kinsmen? Be mindful of thine evil thoughts and deeds."

Duhsasana whispered to his elder brother: "I fear, if thou dost not make peace with the Pandavas, the elders will seize thee and send thee as a prisoner to

Yudhishthira. They desire to make thee and me and Karna to kneel before the Pandavas."

Angry was Duryodhana, and he rose and left the council chamber. Duhsasana and Karna and Shakuni followed him.

Krishna then turned to Dhritarashtra and said: "Thou shouldst arrest these four rebellious princes and act freely and justly towards the Pandavas."

The weak old maharajah was stricken with grief, and he sent Vidura for his elder son. Then came Queen Gāndhārī and remonstrated with Duryodhana; but when she had spoken he answered not, and went away again.

Shakuni and Karna and Duhsasana waited outside for Duryodhana, and they plotted to lay hands on Krishna so that the power of the Pandavas might be weakened. But to Krishna came knowledge of their thoughts, and he informed the elders who were there.

Once again the maharajah summoned Duryodhana before him, and Krishna said: "Ahl thou of little understanding, is it thy desire to take me captive? Know now that I am not alone here, for all the gods and holy beings are with me."

Having spoken thus, Krishna suddenly revealed himself in divine splendour. His body was transformed into a tongue of flame; gods and divine beings appeared about him; fire issued from his mouth and eyes and ears; sparks broke from his skin, which became as radiant as the sun. . . .

All the rajahs closed their eyes; they trembled when an earthquake shook the palace. But Duryodhana remained defiant.

Krishna, having resumed his human form, then bade farewell to the maharajah, who lamented the doings of Duryodhana. The divine one spake and said: "O

Dhritarashtra, thee I forgive freely; but alas! a father is often cursed by the people because of the wicked doings of his own son."

Ere Krishna left the city he met Karna and spake to him, saying: "Come with me, and the Pandavas will regard thee as their elder brother, and thou wilt become the king."

Said Karna: "Although Duryodhana is a rajah, he rules according to my counsel. . . . I know, without doubt, that a great battle is pending which will cover the earth with blood. Terrible are the omens. Calamity awaits the Kauravas. . . . Yet I cannot desert those who have given me their friendship. Besides, if I went with thee now, men would regard me as Arjuna's inferior. Arjuna and I must meet in battle, and fate will decide who is the greater. I know I shall fall in this war, but I must fight for my friends. . . . O mighty one, may we meet on earth again. If not, may we meet in heaven."

Then Krishna and Karna embraced one another, and each went his own way.

Vidura spake to Pritha, mother of the Pandavas, and said: "O mother of living sons, my desire is ever for peace, but although I cry myself hoarse, Duryodhana will not listen to my words. Dhritarashtra is old, yet he doth not work for peace; he is intoxicated with pride for his sons. When Krishna returneth to the Pandavas, war will certainly break out; the sin of the Kauravas will cause much bloodshed. I cannot sleep, thinking of approaching disaster."

Pritha sighed and wept. "Fie to wealth!" she said, "that it should cause kinsmen to slaughter one another. War should be waged between foemen, not friends. If the Pandavas do not fight, they will suffer poverty; if they go to war and win, the destruction of kinsmen will

not bring triumph. My heart is full of sorrow. And alas! it is Karna who supports Duryodhana in his folly; he hath again become powerful."

Pritha lamented the folly of her girlhood which caused Karna to be, and she went forth to look for him. She found her son bathing in sacred waters, and she spoke, saying: "Thou art mine own son, and thy sire is Surya. I hid thee at birth, and Radha, who found thee, is not thy mother. It is not seemly that thou shouldst in ignorance plot with Duryodhana against thine own brethren. Let the Kauravas this day behold the friendship of thee and Arjuna. If you two were side by side you would conquer the world. My eldest son, it is meet that thou shouldst be with thy brethren now. Be no longer known as one of lowly birth."

A voice spoke from the sun, saying: "*What Pritha hath said is truth. O tiger among men, great good will be accomplished if thou wilt obey her command.*"

Karna remained steadfast, for his heart was full of honour. He said unto Pritha, his mother: "O lady, it is now too late to command my obedience. Why didst thou abandon me at birth? If I am a Kshatriya, I have been deprived of my rank. No foeman could have done me a greater injury than thou hast done. Thou hast never been a mother to me, nor do thy sons know I am their brother. How can I now desert the Kauravas, who trust in me in waging this war. I am their boat on which to cross a stormy sea. . . . I will speak without deceit unto thee. For the sake of Duryodhana I will combat against thy sons. I cannot forget his kindness; I cannot forget mine own honour. Thy command cannot now be obeyed by me. Yet thy solicitation to me will not be fruitless. I have power to slay Yudhishtira, and Bhima, and Nakula, and Saha-

deva, but I promise they shall not fall by my hand. I will fight with Arjuna alone. If I slay Arjuna, I will achieve great fame; if I am slain by him, I will be covered with glory."

Said Pritha: "Thou hast pledged the lives of four of thy brethren. Be that remembered to thee in the perils of battle. Blessed be thou, and let health be given thee."

Karna said: "So be it," and then they parted, the mother going one way and the son another.

After this the Pandavas and Kauravas gathered together their mighty armies and marched to the field of battle.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Battle of Eighteen Days

Armies on the Battlefield—Bhishma leads the Kauravas—Karna refrains from fighting—Bhishma's Triumphant Charge—Arjuna's Success—Slaughter of Princes—Bhima in Peril—Iravat is slain—The Rakshasa Warrior—Duryodhana desires Karna as Leader—The Fall of Bhishma—Drona as Leader—How Abhimanyu perished—Arjuna's Revenge—The Night Battle—Drupada and Drona are slain—Karna's Vow—Bhima drinks Duhsasana's Blood—Karna's Combat with Arjuna—The Fall of Karna—The Last Day of Battle—Duryodhana in Hiding—Discovered by Pandavas—Bhima overcomes Duryodhana—Wrath of Balarama—Krishna intervenes—Drona's Son in Pandava Camp—A Night of Slaughter.

Soon after Krishna had returned from Hastinapur, Duryodhana sent a challenge to the Pandavas. His messenger spake, saying: "You have vowed to wage war against us. The time has come for you to fulfil your vow. Your kingdom was seized by me, your wife Draupadi was put to shame, and you were all made exiles. Why do you not now seek to be avenged in battle? Where is drowsy Bhima, who boasted that he would drink the blood of Duhsasana? Duhsasana is weary with waiting for him. Where is arrogant Arjuna, who hath Drona to meet? When mountains are blown about like dust, and men hold back the wind with their hands, Arjuna will take captive the mighty Drona. . . . Of what account was the mace of Bhima and the bow of Arjuna on the day when your kingdom was taken from you, and you were banished like vagabonds? . . .

Vain will be the help of Krishna when you meet us in battle."

Krishna answered the messenger, saying: "Vainly dost thou boast of prowess, but ere long thy fate will be made known unto thee. I will consume thine army like to fire which consumeth withered grass. Thou wilt not escape me, for I will drive the chariot of Arjuna. And let Duhsasana know that the vow of Bhima will ere long be fulfilled."

Said Arjuna: "Tell thou Duryodhana, 'It is unseemly for warriors to boast like women. . . . It is well that Duhsasana cometh to battle.'"

When the messenger spake these words to Duryodhana, Karna said: "Cease this chatter! Let the drums of war be sounded."

So on the morrow at red dawn the armies of the Kauravas and the Pandavas were assembled for battle on the wide plain of Kuru-Kshetra. Bhishma, with his large palmyra standard decked with five stars, had been chosen to lead Duryodhana's army, and Karna, who had quarrelled with him, vowed not to fight so long as the older warrior remained alive. "Should he fall, however," Karna said, "I will go forth against Arjuna."

The army of the Pandavas was commanded by Dhrishta-dyumna, son of Drupada, and brother of Draupadi. Among the young heroes were Arjuna's two sons, the noble and peerless Abhimanyu, whose mother was Krishna's fair sister Subhadra, and brave Iravat, whose mother was Ulupi, the serpent nymph, daughter of the king of the Nagas. Bhima's Rakshasa son, the terrible Ghatotkacha, who had power to change his shape and create illusions, had also hastened to assist his kinsmen. Krishna drove the chariot of Arjuna, who carried his celestial bow, named Gandiva, the gift of the god Agni;

and his standard was the image of Hanuman, the chief ape god, who was the son of Vayu, the wind god. Now the army of Duryodhana was more numerous than the army of Yudhishtira.

Drona led the right wing of the Kaurava forces, which was strengthened by Shakuni, the gambler, and his Gandhari lancers. The left wing was led by Duhshasana, who was followed by Kamboja cavalry and fierce Sakas and Yavanas mounted on rapid steeds. The peoples of the north were there and the peoples of the south, and of the east also.¹ Blind old Dhritarashtra was in the rear, and with him was Sanjaya, his charioteer, who related all that took place, having been gifted with divine vision by Vyasa.

Ere yet the conflict began, Yudhishtira walked unarmed towards the Kauravas, whereat his kinsmen made merry, thinking he was terror-stricken. But Pandu's noble son first spake to Bhishma and asked permission to fight against him. Bhishma gave consent. Then he addressed Drona in like terms, and Drona gave consent also. And ere he returned to his place, Yudhishtira called out before the Kaurava army: "Whoso desireth to help our cause, let him follow me." When he had spoken thus, Yuyutsu, the half-brother of Duryodhana, made answer: "If thou wilt elevate me, I will serve thee well." Said Yudhishtira: "Be my brother." Then Yuyutsu followed Yudhishtira with all his men, and no man endeavoured to hold him back.

When the armies were being set in order for battle, Arjuna bade Krishna to drive his chariot to the open space on which the struggle would take place. Indra's

¹ The late Professor H. H. Wilson considered that the Kamboja were troops of Khurasan, Balikh, and Bokhara, that the Sakas, the Sacæ of the ancients, were some of the Scythians from Turkestan and Tartary, and that the Yavanas, "Ionians", were the Greeks of Bactria. The peoples of south and east included half-breeds and aborigines.

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mighty son surveyed the hosts, and when he saw his kinsmen, young and old, and his friends and all the elders and princes on either side ready to fall upon one another, his heart was touched, and he trembled with pity and sorrow. He spake to Krishna, saying: "I seek nor victory, nor kingdom, nor any joy upon earth. Those for whose sake we might wish for power are gathered against us in battle. What joy can come to us if we commit the crime of slaying our own kinsmen?"

So saying, Arjuna let fall his celestial bow and sat down on the bench of his chariot with a heart full of grief.

Krishna admonished Arjuna, saying: "Thou art a Kshatriya, and it is thy duty to fight, no matter what may befall thee or befall others. So I command thee who *am responsible for thy doings*. He who hath wisdom sorroweth not for the living or for the dead. As one casteth off old raiment and putteth on new, so the soul casteth off this body and entereth the new body. Naught existeth that is not of the soul."

After long instruction, Krishna revealed himself to Arjuna in his celestial splendour and power and said: "Let thy heart and thine understanding be fixed in me, and thou shalt dwell in me hereafter. I will deliver thee from all thy sins. . . . I am the same unto all creatures; there is none hateful to me—none dear. Those who worship me are in me and I am in them. Those who hate me are consigned to evil births: they are deluded birth after birth, nor ever reach unto me."¹

Arjuna gave ear unto the counsel of Krishna, and prepared for the fray.

¹ A long section of the *Afakishkivata* occurring here, and forming a sort of episode or discussion by itself, is called "*Bhagavadgita*", and is dealt with more fully in Chapters VI, VII.

Loudly bellowed the war shells, and the drums of battle were sounded. The Kauravas made ready to attack with horsemen, footmen, and charioteers, and elephants of war. The Pandavas were marshalled to meet them. And the air was filled with the shouting of men, the roaring of elephants, the blasts of trumpets, and the beating of drums: the rattling of chariots was like to thunder rolling in heaven. The gods and Gandharvas assembled in the clouds and saw the hosts which had gathered for mutual slaughter.

As both armies waited for sunrise, a tempest arose and the dawn was darkened by dust clouds, so that men could scarce behold one another. Evil were the omens. Blood dropped like rain out of heaven, while jackals howled impatiently, and kites and vultures screamed hungrily for human flesh. The earth shook, peals of thunder were heard, although there were no clouds, and angry lightning rent the horrid gloom; flaming thunderbolts struck the rising sun and broke in fragments with loud noise. . . .

The undaunted warriors never faltered, despite these signs and warnings. Shouting defiance, they mingled in conflict, eager for victory, and strongly armed. Swords were wielded and ponderous maces, javelins were hurled, and numerous darts also; countless arrows whistled in speedy flight.

When the wind fell and the air cleared, the battle waxed in fury. Bhishma achieved mighty deeds. Duryodhana led his men against Bhima's, and they fought with valour. Yudhishtira fought with Salya, Rajah of Madra¹; Dhrishta-dyumna, son of Drupada, went against Drona, who had captured aforetime half of the Panchala king-

¹ Although the brother of Madri, mother of the two younger Pandava princes, he was an ally of the Kauravas.

mighty son surveyed the hosts, and when he saw his kinsmen, young and old, and his friends and all the elders and princes on either side ready to fall upon one another, his heart was touched, and he trembled with pity and sorrow. He spake to Krishna, saying: "I seek not victory, nor kingdom, nor any joy upon earth. Those for whose sake we might wish for power are gathered against us in battle. What joy can come to us if we commit the crime of slaying our own kinsmen?"

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Drupada's son waged a long combat with Drona, and Bhima performed mighty deeds. He leapt on the back of an elephant and slew the son of the Rajah of Maghadha¹; and he slew the rajah and his elephant also with a single blow of his mace.

Towards evening a furious combat was waged by Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, and Lakshmana, son of Duryodhana. The young Pandava was about to achieve the victory, when Duryodhana came to his son's aid with many rajahs. Shouts were raised: "Abhimanyu is in peril; he will be overcome by force of numbers!" Arjuna heard these words, and rode to the rescue. Thereupon the Kauravas cried out in terror: "Arjuna! Arjuna!" and scattered in flight. That evening Bhishma spake unto Drona and said: "Methinks the gods are against us."

On the third day the army of the Pandavas advanced in crescent formation and drove back the Kaurava army. Many were slain, and rivers of blood laid down the dust; horses writhed in agony, and the air was filled with the shrieking and moaning of wounded men. Terrible were the omens, for headless men rose up and fought against one another; then the people feared that all who contended in that dread battle would be slain.

When he beheld the broken cars, the fallen standards, and the heaps of slain elephants and horses and men, Duryodhana said to Bhishma: "Thou shouldst yield thy place to Karna. Methinks thou art partial to Arjuna and the Pandavas."

Said Bhishma: "Thy struggle is in vain, foolish Duryodhana. None can wipe out the stain of thy sins; of no avail is cunning against a righteous cause. Verily, thou shalt perish because of thy folly. . . . I have no

¹ Behar.

down with the aid of the Pandavas. Drona's wife opposed to Jarishmha, the King of Sindhu, who had volunteered to carry off Drona's son, and was compelled to acknowledge himself the slave of Yudhishthira. Many single combats were fought with uncertain result.

All day the armies battled with growing ardour. When evening was coming on, Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna, perceived that the advantage lay with the Kauravas, chiefly because of Bhishma's prowess. So he went speedily against that mighty warrior, and cut down the crown of his chariot. Bhishma said that never before had he beheld a youthful hero who could perform greater deeds. Then he advanced to make fierce attack upon the Pandava army. Victoriously he went, cutting a blood-red path through the stricken legions; none could resist him for a time. The heart of Arjuna was filled with shame, and he rode against Bhishma, whose advance was stayed. The two heroes fought desperately until dusk. Then Bhishma retired; but Arjuna followed him, and pressed into the heart of the Kaurava host, achieving great slaughter. The truce was sounded, and the first day's battle came to an end.

Yudhishthira was despondent because that the fortunes of war seemed to be against him; in the darkness he went unto Krishna, who bade him to be of good cheer, and Yudhishthira was comforted.

On the morning of the second day Bhishma again attacked the Pandava forces, shattering their ranks; but Arjuna drove him back. Perceiving this, Duryodhana lamented to Bhishma that he had quarrelled with Karna. The old warrior made answer: "Alas! I am a Kshatriya, and must fight even against my beloved kinsman." Then he rode against Arjuna once more, and the two warriors contended fiercely and wounded one another.

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fear of battle, and I will lead the Kauravas until I triumph or fall."

Then angry Bhishma urged his charioteer to attack the enemy; and he drove back all who opposed him, except Arjuna. The fighting became general, nor did it cease until night obscured the plain.

Bhima was the hero of the fourth day of battle. He swept against the Kauravas like a whirlwind; in vain were darts thrown and arrows shot at the strong Pandava. He wounded both Duryodhana and Salya, Rajah Sindhu. Then fourteen of Duryodhana's brethren rushed to combat with him. Like the lion who licks his lips when he beholds his prey drawing nigh, Bhima awaited them. Brief and terrible was the conflict, and ere six princes fell in terror, eight were slaughtered by the mighty Pandava.

Another day dawned, and Arjuna and Bhima advanced in triumph until they were met and held back by Drona. Once again the sons of Duryodhana and Arjuna sought out one another. Mighty were their blows and swift the death. And for a time all men watched them, wondering greatly. At length Lakshmana was grievously wounded, and was carried from the field by his kinsmen. Abhimanyu returned in triumph to Yudhishtira. On that same day were slain by Bhuri-sravas the ten great sons of Satyaki, Krishna's kinsman.

Another day dawned, and it was a day of peril for Bhima. Confident of victory, he pressed too far into the midst of the Kaurava host, and was surrounded by overwhelming numbers. Drupada perceived his peril and hastened to help him, but neither could retreat. Then Arjuna's fearless son, the slayer of Lakshmana, with twelve brave chieftains shattered the Kaurava hosts and rescued Bhima and Drupada from the surging warriors who thirsted for their blood.

The seventh day was the day of Bhishma. None could withstand him in his battle fury. The Pandavas quailed before him, nor could Bhima or Arjuna drive him back. Ere night fell, the standard of Yudhishtira was cut down, and the Kauravas rejoiced greatly, believing that they would achieve a great victory.

On the day that followed, however, the tide of battle turned. As Bhishma advanced, his charioteer was slain, and the steeds took flight in terror. Then confusion fell on the Kaurava army. For a time the Pandavas made resistless advance amidst mighty slaughter. Then the six Gandhari princes advanced to beat back the forces of Yudhishtira. On milk-white steeds they rode, and they swept like to sea birds across the ocean billows. They had vowed to slay Iravat, son of Arjuna and the Naga princess. The gallant youth feared them not and fought triumphantly, stirred with the joy of battle; he slew five of the princes, but the sixth, the eldest prince, struck down Arjuna's son, who was plucked thus rudely from life like to a fair and tender lotus. Terrible was the grief of Arjuna when he was told that his son had fallen. Then with tear-dimmed eyes he dashed upon the foe, thirsting for vengeance; he broke through the Kaurava ranks, and Bhima, who followed him, slew more of Duryodhana's brethren.

Bhima's terrible son, the Rakshasa Ghatotkacha, also sought to be avenged when Iravat fell. Roaring like the sea, he assumed an awesome shape, and advanced with flaming spears like the Destroyer at the end of Time, followed by other Rakshasas. Warriors fled from his path, until Duryodhana went against him with many elephants; but Ghatotkacha scattered the elephant host. Duryodhana fought like a lion and slew four Rakshasas, whereupon Bhima's son, raging furiously, his eyes red as fire,

dashed against Duryodhana; but that mighty Kaurava shot arrows like angry snakes, and he wounded his enemy. Then a rajah urged his elephant in front of Duryodhana's chariot for protection. Ghatotkacha slew the great animal with a flaming dart. Next Bhishma pressed forward with a division to shield Dhritarashtra's son, and the Rakshasa fought fiercely; he wounded Kripa, and with an arrow severed the string of Bhishma's bow. Then the Panchalas hastened to aid Bhima's son, and the Kauravas were scattered in flight.

Duryodhana was stricken with sorrow, and went to the snow-white tent of Bhishma that night and spoke, saying: "Forgive my harsh words, O mighty chieftain. The Pandavas are brave in battle, but they are unable to resist thee. If, however, thou dost love them too well to overcome them utterly, let Karna take thy place, so that he may lead the hosts against our enemies."

Said Bhishma: "Alas! Duryodhana, thy struggle is of no avail. The just cause must win; they who fight for the right are doubly armed. Besides, Krishna is with the Pandavas: he drives Arjuna's car, and not even the gods could strike them down. Thou art confronted by utter ruin, O proud and foolish prince. I will fight as I have fought until the end, which is not now far off."

On the next day Bhishma was like a lordly elephant which treads down the marsh reeds; he was like a fire which burns up a dry and withering forest. In his chariot he advanced triumphantly, and great was the carnage which he wrought.

Yudhishtira was in despair, and spake to Krishna when night fell. Krishna said: "Bhishma has vowed that he will not slay one who had been born a woman, knowing that the righteous would defame him if he slew

a female. Let Sikhandin¹ be therefore sent against him with Arjuna."

Arjuna said: "Alas! I cannot fight behind another, or achieve the fall of Bhishma by foul means. I loved him as a child; I sat upon his knee and called him 'Father'. Rather would I perish than slay the saintly hero."

Said Krishna: "It is fated that Bhishma will fall on the morrow, a victim of wrong. As he hath fought against those whom he loveth, so must thou, Arjuna, fight against him. He hath shown thee how Kshatriyas must ever wage war, although their foemen be hated or well beloved."

Arjuna, being thus admonished, went forth on the tenth day with Sikhandin, born a woman and made a male by a Yaksha.

Once again Duryodhana sought to prevail upon Bhishma to give place to Karna, and Bhishma answered him in anger: "This day will I overcome the Pandavas or perish on the field of battle."

Then the ancient hero advanced and challenged Arjuna. A terrible conflict ensued, and it lasted for many hours; all the warriors on either side stopped fighting and looked on. At length Sikhandin rushed forward like a foaming billow, and when Bhishma saw him his arms fell, for he could not contend against one who had been born a woman. Then the arrows of Arjuna pierced Bhishma's body, and the peerless old hero fell from his chariot wounded unto death. . . . The sun went down, and darkness swept over the plain.

There was great sorrow on the blood-drenched plain

¹ A daughter of Drupada who exchanged her sex with a Yaksha. She was a reincarnation of the Princess Amba of Kasi, who, with her two sisters, was captured by Bhishma at the swayamvara. Her sisters were the mothers of Pandu and Dhritarashtra.

that night. Arjuna wept as a son weeps for a father, and he carried water to Bhishma. Yudhishtira cursed the day on which the war began. To the dying chieftain came Duryodhana and his brethren also. Friends and enemies lamented together over the fallen hero.

Bhishma spoke to Duryodhana, saying: "Hear the counsel of thy dying kinsman; his voice speaketh as from the dead. If thy heart of stone can be moved, thou wilt bring this slaughter of kinsmen by kinsmen to an end now. Restore unto Yudhishtira his kingdom and make thy peace with him, and let Pandavas and Kauravas be friends and comrades together."

He spoke in vain, for his words stirred the heart of Duryodhana to hate his kinsmen the Pandavas with a deeper hatred than before.

Karna came to the battlefield, and Bhishma said unto him: "Proud rivals have we two been, jealous one of the other, and ever at strife. My voice faileth, yet must I tell thee that Arjuna is not greater than thou art on the battlefield. Nor is he of higher birth, for thou art the son of Pritha and the sun god Surya. As Arjuna is thine own brother, 'twould be well for thee to bring this strife to an end."

But Bhishma spoke in vain. Karna hated his brother, and thirsted for his life.

A guard was set round Bhishma, who lay supported by a pillow of arrows, waiting the hour of his doom. Nor did he die until after the great conflict was ended.

The Kauravas held a council of war, and they chose Drona to be their leader. The battle standard of the Brahman was a water jar and a golden altar upon a deer-skin. He vowed before Duryodhana that he would take Yudhishtira prisoner.

On the first day of Drona's command, and the eleventh

day of the great war, Abhimanyu was foremost in the fight. He dragged a chieftain by the hair out of his chariot, and would have taken him prisoner, but Jayadratha, the rajah who had endeavoured to abduct Draupadi, intervened, and broke his sword upon the young man's buckler. Jayadratha fled, and Salya, Rajah of Madra, attacked Arjuna's noble son. But Bhima dashed forward and engaged him in fierce combat. Both were mighty wielders of the mace; they were like two tigers, like two great elephants; they were like eagles rending one another with blood-red claws. The sound of their blows was like the echoing thunder, and each stood as steadfast as a cliff which is struck in vain by fiery lightning. . . . At length both staggered and fell, but Bhima at once sprang up to strike the final blow. Ere he could accomplish his fierce desire, however, Salya was rescued by his followers and carried to a place of safety. . . . Thereafter the battle raged with more fury than ever, until night fell and hid from sight all the dead and the living.

Drona sought to fulfil his vow on the second day of his command, and he prompted Susarman, the rajah who had invaded Virata when the Pandavas were servants there, to send a challenge for single combat to Arjuna. Susarman selected a place apart. Arjuna fought many hours, until he put the boastful rajah and his followers to flight; then he taunted them for their cowardice. Meanwhile Drona had dashed upon Yudhishtira, who, when confronted by certain downfall, leapt on the back of a swift steed and escaped from the battlefield. But it was no shame for a Kshatriya to flee before a Brahman.

Duryodhana went against Bhima: he was wounded after a brief combat, and retreated from the field. Many warriors then pressed against Bhima, but Arjuna had re-

turned after fighting Susarman, and drove furiously against the Kauravas; in triumph he swept over the blood-red plain. Karna watched his rival with jealous wrath and entered the fray. The fire burned redly in his eyes, and he attacked Arjuna, resolved to conquer or to die. Uncertain and long was the conflict, and when night fell the two great warriors withdrew reluctantly from the field.

Drona on the morrow arranged his army like to a spider's web, and once again Susarman challenged Arjuna, so as to draw him from the battle-front. It was the day of Abhimanyu's triumph and the day of his death. Yudhishtira sent Arjuna's son to break the web of foemen, and he rode his chariot against elephants and steeds with conquering fury. Duryodhana attacked the youthful hero with a band of warriors, but fell wounded by Abhimanyu, who also slew the warriors. Salya next dashed against Arjuna's son, but ere long he was carried from the field grievously wounded. Then Duhsasana came forward, frowning and fierce.

Abhimanyu cried out: "Base prince, who plotted with Shakuni to win the kingdom of Yudhishtira and put Draupadi to shame, I welcome thee, for I have waited long for thee. Now thou wilt receive meet punishment for thy sins."

As he spake, the fearless youth flung a dart, and Duhsasana fell stunned and bleeding, but was rescued from death by his followers.

Proudly rode Lakshmana, son of Duryodhana, against Arjuna's son, and fought bravely and well; but he was cut down, and died upon the battlefield.

Then it was that the evil Jayadratha, who had vowed to be the slave of Yudhishtira in the forest, advanced stealthily with six warriors to fight with the lordly youth. Round him they surged like howling billows; alone stood

Abhimanyu, and seven were against him. His charioteer was slain and his chariot was shattered; he leapt to the ground and fought on, slaying one by one. . . . Perceiving his peril, the Pandavas endeavoured to rescue Arjuna's son; but Jayadratha held them back, and Karna aided him. At length Abhimanyu was wounded on the forehead, blood streamed into his eyes and blinded him, and he stumbled. Ere he could recover, the son of Duhsasana leapt forward and dashed out his brains with a mace. So died the gallant youth, pure as he was at birth. He died like to a forest lion surrounded by hunters; he sank like to the red sun at evening; he perished like to a tempest whose strength is spent; he was spent out even like a fire which has consumed a forest and is extinguished on the plain; Abhimanyu was lost as is the serene white moon when shrouded in black eclipse.

So that day's battle ended, and Abhimanyu slumbered in the soft starlight, lifeless and cold.

When it was told to Arjuna that his son was slain, the mighty warrior wept silently and lay upon the ground. At length he leapt up and cried: "May the curse of a father and the vengeance of a warrior smite the murderers of my boy! . . . May I never reach heaven if I do not slay Jayadratha on the morrow. . . ." A spy hastened to the camp of the Kauravas and told of the vow which Arjuna had taken. Jayadratha trembled with fear.

Early next morning Arjuna spake to Krishna, saying: "Drive swiftly, for this will be a day of great slaughter." He desired to find Jayadratha; with him went Bhima and Satyaki. Many warriors engaged them in battle, for the Kauravas hoped to contrive that the sun should go down ere Arjuna could fulfil his terrible vow.

Mounted on an elephant, Duhsasana opposed Arjuna; but the lordly tusker took flight when the rattling chariot

drew nigh. Drona blocked the way; but Arjuna refused combat, saying: "Thou art as a father unto me. . . . Let me find the slayer of my son. . . ." He passed on. Then Duryodhana came up and engaged him. Karna fought with Bhima, and Bhurisrava attacked Satyaki. Long waged the bitter conflicts, and at length Krishna perceived that his kinsman was about to be slain. He called to Arjuna, who cast a celestial weapon at Bhurisrava, which cut off both his arms; then Satyaki slew him. Many warriors confronted Arjuna thereafter, and many fell. But the day wore on and evening drew nigh, and he could not find Jayadratha. At length Arjuna bade Krishna to drive furiously onward, and to pause not until he found the slayer of his son. The chariot sped like to a whirlwind, until at length Arjuna beheld the evil-hearted Jayadratha; he was guarded by Karna and five great warriors, and at that time the sun had begun to set.

Karna leapt forward and engaged Arjuna; but Krishna, by reason of his divine power, caused a dark cloud to obscure the sun, whereupon all men believed that night had fallen. Karna at once withdrew; but Arjuna drove on, and as the sun shot forth its last ray of dazzling light, he dashed upon Jayadratha as a falcon swoops down upon its prey. Brief was the struggle, for ere daylight faded utterly, Arjuna overthrew the slayer of his son and cut off his head. Bhima uttered a roar of triumph when he saw the head of Jayadratha held aloft, and the Kauravas sorrowed greatly because that their wicked design had been thwarted.

Night fell, but the fighting was renewed. In the darkness and confusion men slew their kinsmen, fathers cut down their sons, and brothers fought against brothers. Yudhishtira sent men with torches to light up the blood-

red plain, and the battle was waged for many hours. Swords were splintered and spears were lost, and warriors threw great boulders and chariot wheels against one another. All men were maddened with the thirst for blood, and the night was filled with horrors.

At length Arjuna called for a truce, and it was agreed that the warriors should sleep on the battlefield. So all lay down, the charioteer in his chariot, the horseman on his steed, and the driver of the elephant on his elephant's back. . . .

Duryodhana reproached Drona because that he did not slay the Pandavas in their sleep. . . . "Let Karna," he said, "lead the hosts to victory."

Said Drona: "Thou art reaping the red harvest of thy sins. . . . But know now that on the morrow either Arjuna will fall or I will be slain by him."

When the bright moon rose in the heavens the conflict was renewed. Many fell on that awful night. Ghatotkacha, the Rakshasa son of Bhima, was foremost in the fray, and he slaughtered numerous Kaurava warriors. At length Karna went against him, and then the air was filled with blazing arrows. Each smote the other with powerful weapons, and for a time the issue hung in the balance. Ghatotkacha created illusions, but Karna kept his senses in that great fight, even after his steeds had been slain; he leapt to the ground, then flung a celestial dart, the gift of Indra, and Ghatotkacha, uttering terrible cries, fell down and breathed his last breath. The Kauravas shouted with gladness, and the Pandavas shed tears of sorrow.

Ere the night was ended, Drona slew his ancient enemy Drupada, Rajah of Southern Panchala, and he cut down also the Rajah of Virata.

Ere dawn broke, Dhrishta-dyumna, son of Drupada,

went forth to search for Drona, the slayer of his beloved sire.

Said Bhima: "Thou art too young to strike down so great a warrior as Drona. I will fight with him until he is wearied, then thou canst approach and be avenged."

Bhima struggled with the sage, his preceptor, for many hours; then Dhrishta-dyumna engaged him, but neither could prevail over the slayer of Drupada.

At length the Pandava warriors shouted falsely: "Aswatthaman, son of Drona, is slain."

When Drona heard the dread tidings, he fainted in his chariot, and vengeful Dhrishta-dyumna rushed forward and cut off his head. Then the son of Drupada threw the head of Drona towards Duryodhana, saying: "Here is the head of thy mighty warrior; I will cut off the heads of each Kaurava prince in like manner."

The fall of Drona was like the sinking of heaven's sun; it was like the drying up of the ocean; the Kauravas fled away in fear.

Terrible was the grief of Aswatthaman when he approached at eventide and found that his sire had been slain. Night fell while he sorrowed, and he vowed to slay Dhrishta-dyumna and all his kindred.

Karna was then chosen to be the leader of the Kaurava army, and Duryodhana hailed him with joy and said: "*Thou alone canst stem the tide of our disasters. Arjuna hath been spared by Bhishma and by Drona because that they loved him. But the arm of Karna is strengthened by hatred of the proud Pandava archer.*"

When morning broke over the plain of Kuru-kshetra, the first battle of Karna began, and it continued all day long. Countless warriors were slain; blood ran in streams, and the dead and mangled bodies of men and elephants and horses were strewn in confusion. The air was

darkened with arrows and darts, and it rang with the shouts of the fighters and the moans of the wounded, the bellowing of trumpets, and the clamour of drums.

At length evening came on and the carnage ended. . . . Duryodhana summoned a council of war and said: "This is the sixteenth day of the war, and many of our strongest heroes have fallen. Bhishma and Drona have fallen, and many of my brethren are now dead."

Said Karna: "To-morrow will be the great day of the war. I have vowed to slay Arjuna or fall by his hand."

Duryodhana was cheered by Karna's words, and all the Kauravas were once more hopeful of victory.

In the morning Karna went forth in his chariot. He chose for his driver Salya, Rajah of Madra, whose skill was so great that even Krishna was not his superior.

Arjuna was again engaged in combat with Susarman when Karna attacked the Pandava army. So the son of Surya went against Yudhishtira and cast him on the ground, saying: "If thou wert Arjuna I would slay thee."

Bhima then attacked Karna, and they fought fiercely for a time, until Arjuna, having overcome Susarman, returned again to combat with Karna.

Duhsasana, who put Draupadi to shame, came up to help Karna, and Bhima sprang upon him. Now Bhima had long desired to meet this evil-hearted son of the blind maharajah, so that he might fulfil his vow. He swung his mace and struck so mighty a blow that the advancing chariot was shattered. Duhsasana fell heavily upon the ground and broke his back. Then Bhima seized him and, whirling his body aloft, cried out: "O Kauravas, come ye who dare and rescue the helper of Karna."

No one ventured to approach, and Bhima cast down Duhsasana's body, cut off his head, and drank his blood

as he had vowed to do. "Ho! ho!" he cried, "never have I tasted a sweeter draught. . . ."

Many Kaurava warriors fled, and they cried out: "This is not a man, for he drinketh human blood."

All men watched the deadly combat which was waged between the mighty heroes Arjuna and Karna. They began by shooting arrows one at another, while Krishna and Salya guided the chariots with prowess and care. The arrows of Arjuna fell upon Karna like to summer rain; Karna's arrows were like stinging snakes, and they drank blood. At length Arjuna's celestial bow Gandiva was struck and the bow-string severed. . . .

Arjuna said: "Pause, O Karna. According to the rules of battle, thou canst not attack a disabled foe-man."

But Karna heeded not. He showered countless arrows, until his proud rival was wounded grievously on the breast.

When Arjuna had restrung his bow, he rose up like to a stricken and angry tiger held at bay, and cast a screen of arrows against his foe. But Karna feared him not, nor could Arjuna bear him down. The issue hung in the balance. . . .

Then suddenly a wheel of Karna's chariot sank in the soft ground, nor could Salya urge the horses to advance.

Karna cried out: "Pause now, O Arjuna, nor wage unequal war. It is not manly to attack a helpless enemy."

Arjuna paused; but Krishna spake quickly, saying: "O Karna, thou speakest truly; but was it manly to shoot arrows at Arjuna whilst he engaged himself re-stringing his bow? Was it manly to scoff at Draupadi when she was put to shame before elders and princes in

the gambling hall? Was it manly of thee and six warriors to surround Abhimanyu so as to murder him without compassion?"

When Arjuna heard his son's name, his heart burned with consuming wrath. Snatching from his quiver a crescent-bladed arrow, he drew his bow and shot it at Karna, whose head was immediately struck off.

So fell in that dread combat a brother by a brother's hand.

The Kauravas fled in terror when Karna was slain, and Kripa said unto Duryodhana: "Now that our greatest warriors are dead, it would be well to sue for peace."

Said Duryodhana: "After the wrongs I have done the Pandavas, how can I ask or expect mercy at their hands? Let the war go on till the end comes."

Salya was then chosen as the leader of the Kaurava army, which had greatly shrunk in numbers, and on the morning of the eighteenth day of the war the battle was waged with fury. But the Pandavas were irresistible, and when Duryodhana perceived that they were sweeping all before them, he fled away secretly, carrying his mace. He had power to hide under water as long as he desired, by reason of a mighty charm which had been conferred upon him by the demons; so he plunged into a lake and lay concealed below the waters.

Salya was slain by Yudhishtira, and he fell like to a thunder-splintered rock. Sahadeva overthrew false Shakuni, the gambler, who had played against Yudhishtira with loaded dice, and Bhima cut down all Duryodhana's brethren who had survived until that last fateful day. Of all the Kaurava heroes there then remained alive only Aswa-thaman, son of Drona, Kripa, and Kritavarman, and the hidden Duryodhana.

At length Bhima discovered where Duryodhana was

concealed. Yudhishtira went to the lake side and urged him to come forth and fight.

Said Duryodhana: "Take my kingdom now and have pleasure in it. Depart and leave me, for I must retire to the jungle and engage in meditation."

Yudhishtira said: "I cannot accept aught from thee except what is won in battle."

Said Duryodhana: "If you promise to fight one by one, I will come out of the water and slay you all."

Yudhishtira said: "Come forth, and the battle will be fought as thou dost desire. Now thou hast spoken as becomes a Kshatriya."

Still Duryodhana tarried, and Bhima shouted: "If thou dost not come out of the lake at once, I will plunge in and drag thee to the shore."

Then Duryodhana came forth, and the Pandavas laughed to see him, for he was covered with mire, and water streamed down from his raiment.

Said Duryodhana: "Soon will your merriment be turned to grief."

Now, all during the time of the Pandava exile, Duryodhana had practised with the mace, so that he became the equal of Bhima. But he had no one to support him there. The other survivors remained in hiding. Then Balarama appeared, and he caused the combat to be waged in the middle of the blood-red plain; he was Duryodhana's supporter.

The warriors fought like two fierce bulls, and smote one another heavy blows, until their faces were reddened with blood. Once Duryodhana almost achieved victory, for he struck Bhima on the head so that all present thought that the Pandava hero had received his deathblow. Bhima staggered but recovered himself, and soon afterwards he struck Duryodhana a foul blow upon the knee, which

smashed the bone so that he fell prostrate. Thus was the vow of Bhima fulfilled. . . .

He danced round Duryodhana a time, then, kicking his enemy's head, cried out at length: "Draupadi is avenged."

Yudhishtira was wroth; he smote Bhima on the face and said: "O accursed villain, thou wilt cause all men to speak ill of us."

Then Arjuna led Bhima away, and Yudhishtira knelt beside Duryodhana and said: "Thou art still our ruler, and if thou wilt order me to slay Bhima, thy command will be obeyed. Thou art now very nigh unto death, and I sorrow for the Kaurava wives and children, who will curse us because that thou hast been laid low."

Said Balarama: "Bhima hath broken the laws of combat, for he smote Duryodhana below the waist."

Krishna said: "My brother, did not Duryodhana wrong the Pandavas with foul play at dice? And did not Bhima, when he beheld Draupadi put to shame, vow to break the knee of Duryodhana?"

Said Balarama: "So thou dost approve of this? . . . Can I forget that Bhima kicked the head of our wounded kinsman, the rajah?"

Krishna stayed the vengeful hand of Balarama, and prevailed upon him to take vows not to fight against the Pandavas.

When night fell, the dying Duryodhana was visited on the battlefield by Aswatthaman, son of Drona, and Kripa, and Kritavarman. Unto Aswatthaman he gave permission to attack the Pandavas while yet they slumbered. . . . Then Drona's son went forth in the darkness to glut his hunger for vengeance because that his sire had been slain. . . . The pale stars looked down on the dead and the dying as Aswatthaman crossed the

battleplain and went stealthily towards the tents of his foemen, with Kripa and Kritavarman.

At the gate of the Pandava camp an awful figure rose up against the conspirators. Aswatthaman was not afraid, and he fought with his adversary until he perceived that he was the god Shiva, the Blue-throated Destroyer. Then Drona's son drew back, and on an altar he kindled a fire to worship the all-powerful deity. Then, having naught else to sacrifice, he cast his own body upon the flames. By this supremely pious act Shiva was propitiated; he accepted Drona's son and entered his body, saying: "Hitherto, for the sake of Krishna, have I protected the sons of Draupadi, but now their hour of doom hath come."

Then Aswatthaman rushed into the camp and, slaughtered with the cruel arm of vengeance. Rudely he awakened Dhrihsta-dyumna, who cried out: "Coward! wouldst thou attack a naked man?"

Aswatthaman answered not his father's slayer, but took his life with a single blow. . . . Through the camp he went, striking down each one he met, and shrieks and moans arose on every side.

Draupadi was awakened by the clamour, and her five young sons sprang up to protect her. Aswatthaman slew each one without pity. . . . Then he lit a great fire to discover those who had concealed themselves, and with reeking hands he completed his ghastly work of slaughter. Meanwhile Kripa and Kritavarman, with weapons in their hands, kept watch at the gate, and cut down all who endeavoured to escape.

Now the Pandava princes slept safely on that night of horror in the camp of the Kauravas, so that they escaped the sword of Drona's son.

When his fell work was accomplished, the blood-

thirsty Aswatthaman cut off the heads of Draupadi's five sons and carried them to Duryodhana, who rejoiced greatly, believing that they were the heads of Yudhishthira and his brethren. But when he perceived that the avenger of night had slain the children of Draupadi instead, he cried out: "Alas! what horror hast thou committed? Thou hast slain innocent children, who, had they lived, would have perpetuated our name and our fame. My heart burns with anger against the sires and not their harmless sons."

Duryodhana groaned heavily: his heart was oppressed with grief, and, bowing down his head, he died sorrowing.

Then Aswatthaman and Kripa and Kritavarman fled away, fearing the wrath of the Pandavas.

CHAPTER XIX

Atonement and the Ascent to Heaven

Draupadi's Sorrow—The Vengeful Maharajah—Bhima is Forgiven—Dead Burned on Battlefield—Atonement for Sin—The Horse Sacrifice—Arjuna's Wanderings—A Woman turned to Stone—The Amaraons—Father and Son Conflict—The Wonderful Serpent Jewel—Return of the Horse—The Sacrifice Performed—Maharajah Retires to the Forest—Meeting of Mournful Relatives—The Vision of the Dead—Widows Drown Themselves—A Forest Tragedy—Dwaraka Horror—End of Krishna and Balarama—City Destroyed by the Sea—Farewell of the Pandavas—The Journey to Heaven—Yudhishtira Tested by Deities—Vision of Hell—The Holy Life.

WHEN it was told to the Pandava brethren that their camp had been raided in darkness by the bloodthirsty Aswatthaman, Yudhishtira exclaimed: "Alas! sorrow upon sorrow crowds upon us, and now the greatest sorrow of all hath fallen. *Draupadi mourns the death of her brother and her five sons, and I fear she will perish with grief.*"

Draupadi came before her husbands and, weeping bitterly, said: "For thirteen cruel years you have endured shame and exile so that your children might prosper. But now that they are all slain, can you desire to have power and kingdom?"

Said Krishna: "O daughter of a rajah, is thy grief so great as is Pritha's and Gandhari's, and as great as those who lament the loss of their husbands on the battlefield? Thou hast less cause than others to wail now."

Draupadi was soothed somewhat, but she turned to

Bhima and said: "If thou wilt not bring to me the head of Aswatthaman, I will never again look upon thy face."

Said Yudhishtira: "Aswatthaman is a Brahman, and Vishnu, the greatest of the gods, will punish him if he hath done wrong. If we should slay him now, O Draupadi, thy sons and thy brother and thy sire would not be restored unto thee."

Draupadi said: "So be it. But Aswatthaman hath a great jewel which gleams in darkness. Let it be taken from him, for it is as dear unto him as his life."

Then Ariuna went in pursuit of Aswatthaman and found him, and returned with the jewel.

To the battlefield came blind old Dhritarashtra, mourning the death of his hundred sons. And with the weeping maharajah were Queen Gandhari and the wives of the Kaurava princes, who sorrowed aloud. Wives wept for their husbands, their children wailed beside them, and mothers moaned for their sons. Bitter was the anguish of tender-hearted women, and the air was filled with wailing on that blood-red plain of Kurukshetra.

When Queen Gandhari beheld the Pandavas she cried out: "The smell of Duryodhana is upon you all."

Now Dhritarashtra plotted in his weak mind to crush the head of Bhima, the slayer of Duryodhana. When he embraced Yudhishtira he said: "Where is Bhima?" and they placed before him an image of the strong Pandava. Dhritarashtra put forth his arms, and he crushed the image in his embrace and fell back fainting. Then he wailed: "Alas! Bhima was as a son unto me. Although I have slain him, the dead cannot return."

Well pleased was the maharajah when it was told to him that Bhima still lived; and he embraced his son's

slayer tenderly and with forgiveness, saying: "I have no children now save the sons of Pandu, my brother."

Pritha rejoiced to meet her five sons, and she embraced them one by one. Then she went towards the sorrowing Draupadi, who fainted in her arms. Thereafter they wept together for the dead.

The bodies of the slain rajahs and princes were collected together, and wrapped in perfumed linen and laid each upon a funeral pyre and burned, and the first pyre which was kindled was that of Duryodhana. The Pandavas mourned for their kinsmen. Then they bathed in the holy Ganges, and took up water and sprinkled it in the name of each dead hero. Yudhishtira poured out the oblation for Karna, his brother, and he gave great gifts to his widows and his children. Thereafter all the remaining bodies of the slain were burned on the battlefield.¹

Yudhishtira was proclaimed rajah in the city of Hastinapur, and he wore the great jewel in his crown. A great sacrifice was offered up, and Dhaumya, the family priest of the Pandavas, poured the Homa offering to the gods on the sacred fire. Yudhishtira and Draupadi were anointed with holy water.

In the days that followed, Yudhishtira lamented over the carnage of the great war, nor could he be comforted. At length Vyasa, the sage, appeared before him and advised that he should perform the horse sacrifice to atone for his sins.

Then search was made for a moon-white horse with yellow tail and one black ear, and when it was found a plate of gold, inscribed with the name of Yudhishtira, was tied upon its forehead. Thereafter the horse was

¹ The widows were burned with their husbands, for the Sati (or Suttas) ceremony had not yet become general in India; nor did the Brahmans officiate at the pyre.

let loose, and was allowed to wander wheresoever it desired. A great army, which was led by Arjuna, followed the horse.

Now it was the custom in those days that when the sacred horse entered a raj¹, that raj was proclaimed to be subject to the king who performed the ceremony. And if any ruler detained the horse, he was compelled to fight with the army which followed the wandering animal. Should he be overcome in battle, the opposing rajah immediately joined forces with those of the conqueror, and followed the horse from kingdom to kingdom. For a whole year the animal was allowed to wander thus.

The horse was let loose on the night of full moon in the month of Choitro.²

Arjuna met with many adventures. He fought against a rajah and the son of a rajah, who had a thousand wives in the country of Malwa, and defeated them. But Agni, who had married a daughter of the rajah, came to rescue his kin. He fought against Arjuna with fire, but Arjuna shot celestial arrows which produced water. Then the god made peace, and the rajah who had detained the horse went away with Arjuna. Thereafter the horse came to a rock which was the girl-wife of a Rishi who had been thus transformed because of her wickedness. "So will you remain," her husband had said, "until Yudhishtira performs the Aswa-medha ceremony." The horse was unable to leave the rock. Then Arjuna touched the rock, which immediately became a woman, and the horse was set free.

In time the horse entered the land of Amazons, and the queen detained it, and came forth with her women warriors to fight against Arjuna, who, however, made peace with them and went upon his way. Thereafter

¹ Royal territory.

² The Easter full moon.

the holy steed reached a strange country where men and women and horses and cows and goats grew upon mighty trees like to fruit, and came to maturity and died each day. The rajah came against Arjuna, but was defeated. Then all the army fled to the islands of the sea, for they were Daityas, and Arjuna plundered their dwellings and obtained much treasure.

Once the horse entered a pond, and was cursed by the goddess Parvati, and it became a mare; it entered another pond and became a lion, owing to a Brahman's spell.

In the kingdom of Manipura the horse was seized, and soldiers armed with fire weapons were ready to fight against the Pandavas and their allies. But when the king, whose name was Kishru-vidhana, discovered that the horse was the name of Yudhishtira, he said: "Arjuna is my son," and he went forth and made obeisance, and put his head under the foot of the Pandava hero. But Arjuna spurned him, saying: "If I were thy sire, thou wouldst have no fear of me."

Then the king challenged Arjuna to battle, and was victorious on that day. He took all the great men prisoners, and he severed Arjuna's head from his body with a crescent-bladed arrow. The rajah's mother, Chitrangada, was stricken with sorrow, as was also Ulupi, the daughter of Vasuka, the king of serpents, who had borne a son to Arjuna. But Ulupi remembered that her sire possessed a magic jewel which had power to restore a dead man to life, and she sent the rajah of Manipura to obtain it from the underworld. But the Nagas refused to give up the jewel, whereupon Arjuna's mighty

as we meet with the familiar father-and-son-combat theme of which the stories of Sobres and Ruston, the Germanic Hiltbrand and Hiltbrand, and the Is and Coniarch are representative variants. Arjuna had effected a gaudious marriage according to patriarchal customs.

son fought against them with arrows which were transformed into peacocks; and the peacocks devoured the serpents. Then the Naga king delivered up the magic jewel, and the rajah returned with it. He touched the body of Arjuna with the jewel, and the hero came to life again, and all his wounds were healed. When he departed from Manipura city the rajah, his son, accompanied him.

So from kingdom to kingdom the horse wandered while the army followed, until a year had expired. Then it returned to Hastinapur.

Yudhishtira had meantime lived a life of purity and self-restraint. Each night he lay upon the ground, and always slept within the city. Beside him lay Draupadi, and a naked sword was ever betwixt them.

Great were the rejoicings of the people when the horse came back: they made glad holiday, and went forth to welcome the army with gifts of fine raiment and jewels and flowers. Money was scattered in the streets, and the poor were made happy, being thus relieved generously in their need.

Yudhishtira embraced Arjuna and kissed him and wept tears of gladness, and welcomed Arjuna's son, Babhru-váhana, Rajah of Manipura, and also the other rajahs who had followed the sacred horse.

Twelve days after the return of Arjuna, and on the day when Magha's full moon marked the close of the winter season, the people assembled in great multitudes from far and near to share Yudhishtira's generous hospitality and witness the Aswa-medha ceremony, which was held upon a green and level portion of consecrated ground. Stately pavilions, glittering with jewels and gold, had been erected for the royal guests, and there were humbler places for the Brahmans. In thrones of

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Then the rajah challenged Arjuna to battle, and was victorious on that day.¹ He took all the great men prisoners, and he severed Arjuna's head from his body with a crescent-bladed arrow. The rajah's mother, Hit-rangada, was stricken with sorrow, as was also the daughter of Vasuka, the king of the Nagas, who bore a son to Arjuna. But Ulupi, his wife, who was his sire possessed a magic jewel which had the power to raise a dead man to life, and she sent the Pandava to obtain it from the underworld. He refused to give up the jewel, and she was angry.

¹ Here we meet with the familiar father-and-son motif of the Persian Sohrab and Rustem, the Germanic Celtic Cuchullin and Conlaech are also connected by a temporary exogamous marriage according to

son fought against them with arrows which were transformed into peacocks; and the peacocks devoured the serpents. Then the Naga king delivered up the magic jewel, and the rajah returned with it. He touched the body of Arjuna with the jewel, and the hero came to life again, and all his wounds were healed. When he departed from Manipura city the rajah, his son, accompanied him.

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gold sat Maharajah Dhritarashtra and Rajah Yudhishtira, and the other rajahs had thrones of sandalwood and gold. The royal ladies were ranged together in their appointed places. Wise Vyasa was there, and he directed the ceremony. And Krishna, the holy one, was there also.

When all the guests were assembled, Yudhishtira and Draupadi bathed together in the sacred waters of the Ganges. Then a portion of ground was measured out, and Yudhishtira ploughed it with a golden plough. Draupadi followed him, and sowed the seeds of every kind which is sown in the kingdom, while all the women and the Brahmans chanted holy mantras. Then a golden altar was erected with four broad layers of golden bricks, and stakes of sacred wood from the forest and from Himalaya, and it was canopied and winged with gold-brocaded silk.

Then eight pits were dug for Homa¹ of milk and butter to be made ready for the sacrificial fire, and in skins were wrapped up portions of every kind of vegetable and curative herb which grew in the kingdom, and these were placed in the Homa pits.

On the ground there were numerous sacrificial stakes, to which were tied countless animals—bulls and buffaloes and steeds, wild beasts from forest and mountain and cave, birds of every kind, fishes from river and lake, and even insects.

The priests offered up animals in sacrifice to each celestial power, and the feasting was beheld by sacred beings. The Gandharvas sang, and the Apsaras, whom the Gandharvas wooed, danced like sunbeams on the grass. Messengers of the gods were also gathered there, and Vyasa and his disciples chanted mantras to celestial music. The people lifted up their voices at the sound

¹ Offerings.

of rain drum and the blast of the rain trumpet. Then bright was the lustre of Yudhishtira's fame.

When all the kings and royal ladies and sages took their places to be blessed by the horse sacrifice, Yudhishtira sat on his throne, and in his hand he held the horn of a stag.

Vyasa sent four-and-sixty rajahs with their wives to draw water from the holy Ganges. Many musicians went with them beating drums and blowing trumpets and playing sweet instruments, and girls danced in front, going and returning. And all the rajahs and their wives were given splendid raiment by Yudhishtira, and necklaces of jewels also, and he put betelnut in their mouths one by one. To the Brahmans were gifted much gold and many jewels, and elephants, horses, and kine, and they were well pleased.

Yudhishtira then sat naked in his throne, and each one who had drawn holy water poured a quantity over his head; and they poured what remained over the head of the sacred white horse.

Nákula held the horse's head, and said: "The horse speaketh."

Those who were about him asked in loud voices: "What doth the horse reveal?"

Said Nákula: "Thus speaketh the horse—'In other such ceremonies the horse which is sacrificed departs unto Swarga¹, but I shall rise far above Swarga, because that Krishna is here'."

Then Dhaumya, having washed the horse, gave a scimitar to Bhima with which to strike off the head at a single blow. But ere this was done, Dhaumya pressed an ear of the holy animal, and milk flowed forth. Then he said to Bhima: "Pure indeed is the horse; verily the

¹ Indra's heaven.

gods will accept the sacrifice. Strike now, O strong one."

Bhima raised the scimitar and severed the head, which immediately ascended unto heaven and vanished from before the eyes of all. Great was the wonder and the joy of the assembled multitude.

Krishna and other rajahs and sages then cut open the horse's body, from which a bright light issued forth. They found that the animal was pure, and Krishna said unto Yudhishtira: "This, thy sacrifice, is acceptable unto Vishnu."

Draupadi was made Queen of the Sacrifice, and mantras were chanted, and she was adored and given rich offerings, because of her virtue and her wisdom.

The body of the slain steed was divided, and the flesh gave forth the odour of camphor. Priests lifted portions in their ladles and placed these on the sacrificial fire, and they made Soma. And Rajah Yudhishtira and all his brethren stood in the sin-cleansing smoke and breathed its fragrance.

Dhaumya cried out, as he laid a piece of flesh on the altar fire: "O Indra, accept thou this flesh which hath turned to camphor."

When he had uttered these words, Indra, accompanied by many gods, appeared before the people, who made obeisance with fear and secret joy. Indra took from Vyasa portions of the flesh and gave these to each of the gods. Then he vanished from sight with all his companions.

Vyasa blessed Yudhishtira, and Krishna embraced him.

Said Krishna: "Thy fame will endure for ever."

Yudhishtira made answer: "Unto thee do I owe all these blessings."

Thereafter Krishna and the rajahs poured holy water over the heads of Yudhishtira and Draupadi.

All the fragments of the herbs which had been provided for Homa were then ground into powder. And Yudhishtira gave balls of the powder to each one present, so that they might eat of the sacred herbs and share in the blessings of the Aswa-medha. He ate his own portion last of all. The fragments of the offerings which remained were burnt on the altar.

Then Pritha and all the maidens who were with her made merry, while the musicians played gladsome airs.

Yudhishtira distributed more gifts. Unto Vyasa he assigned an estate, and bestowed upon the Brahmins who officiated many animals and pearls and slaves. To the rajahs he gave war elephants and steeds and money, and to the rajahs' wives bridal-night gifts of raiment and jewels and gold.

Bhima feasted all the Brahmins, and Yudhishtira wept as he bade farewell to Krishna, his friend in peace and in war, who departed in his chariot unto sea-washed Dwaraka.

There was prosperity in the kingdom under Yudhishtira's wise and just government; but blind old Dhritarashtra never ceased to mourn the death of Duryodhana, his first-born, and at length he retired to live in a humble dwelling in the jungle. With him went Queen Gandhari, and Pritha, the mother of the Pandavas, and Vidura, and others who were of great age.

Years went past, and a day came when Yudhishtira and his brethren and their wife Draupadi journeyed to the dwelling-place of their elders. They found them all there save Vidura, who had departed to a sacred place on the banks of the Ganges to undergo penance and wait for the coming of Yama, god of the dead. Then all the

kinsfolk, young and old, went forth to find Vidura; but when they came to him he was wasted with hunger and great age, nor could he speak unto them. They waited beside him until he died, and then they mourned together. This new sorrow awakened old-time grief, and they spoke of all those who had fallen in the great war. Fathers and mothers lamented for their sons, and wives for their husbands. . . .

While they wept and moaned together, the great sage Vyasa came nigh and spoke, saying: "Verily, I will soothe all your sorrows. . . . Let each one bathe at sunset in the holy waters of the Ganges, and when night falls your lost ones will return to you once again."

Then they all sat waiting on the river bank until evening came on. Slowly passed the day; it seemed to be as long as a year.

At length the sun went down, and they chanted mantras and went into the Ganges. Vyasa bathed beside the old Maharajah Dhritarashtra and Yudhishtira. . . . Then all came out and stood on the bank.

Suddenly the waters began to heave and foam, and Vyasa muttered holy words and called out the names of the dead one by one. . . . Soon all the heroes who had been slain arose one by one. In chariots they came, and on horseback and riding upon lordly elephants. They all uttered triumphant cries; drums were sounded and trumpets were blown; and it seemed as if the armies of the Pandavas and Kauravas were once again assembled for battle, for they swept over the river like a mighty tempest.

Many of the onlookers trembled with fear, until they beheld Bhishma and Drona, clad in armour, standing aloft in their chariots in splendour and in pride; then came Arjuna's son, the noble Abhimanyu, and Bhima's Asura

son. Soon Gandhari beheld Duryodhana and all his brethren, while Pritha looked with glad eyes upon Karna, and Draupadi welcomed her brother Dhrishtha-dyumna and her five children who had all been slain by vengeful Aswatthaman. All the warriors who had fallen in battle returned again on that night of wonder.

With the host came minstrels who sang of the deeds of the heroes, and beautiful girls who danced before them. All strife had ended between kinsmen and old-time rivals; in death there was peace and sweet companionship.

The ghostly warriors crossed the Ganges and were welcomed by those who waited on the bank around Vyasa. It was a night of supreme and heart-stirring gladness. Fathers and mothers found their sons, widows clung to their husbands, sisters embraced their brothers, and all wept tears of joy. The elders who were living conversed with those who were dead; the burdens of grief and despair fell from all hearts after lone years of mourning; the past was suddenly forgotten in the rapture of beholding those who had died.

Swiftly passed the night as if it had endured but for an hour. Then when dawn began to break, the dead men returned to their chariots and their horses and their elephants and bade farewells. . . .

Vyasa spoke to the widows and said that those of them who desired to be with their husbands could depart with them. Then the Kaurava princesses and other high-born ladies, who never ceased to mourn for their own, kissed the feet of the Maharajah Dhritarashtra and Queen Gandhari and plunged into the Ganges with the departing hosts. . . . Vyasa chanted mantras, and all the drowned widows were transported to heaven with their husbands. . . .

The Pandavas returned to Hastinapur, and when two years had gone past a new sorrow fell upon them. One

day Narada, the sage, stood before Yudhishtira and that a great fire had swept through the jungle, and Dhritarashtra, and Gandhari, and Pritha, and all were with them, had perished.

Soon afterwards the Pandavas came to know reason of dread omens which appeared, that a calamity was drawing nigh, but no man could tell it was or when it would take place.

Ere long it became known that the city of Dwarka was doomed to be destroyed. A horror in human shape was beheld in the night; it was coloured yellow and black, its head was bald and its limbs misshapen, men said it was Yama, god of the dead. . . . Vision of headless men contending in battle were beheld at sunrise. . . . The moon was eclipsed, a dread tempest raved over the land, and a plague of rats afflicted the city.

Krishna forbade all the people, on pain of death, to drink wine, and commanded them to perform devotion on the seashore. . . .

Then the night was haunted by a black woman with yellow teeth who grinned horribly at house doors. . . . the inhabitants of the city were stricken with terror. . . . Evil spirits came also and robbed the jewels of the women and the weapons of the men. . . . At length the chariot of Krishna went up to heaven, and his chariot and horses followed it. . . . The end of the Yādavas was not far off, and the day came when Apsaras called out of heaven, "Depart from hence," and all the people heard them.

When the people gathered on the seashore they held a feast, and being allowed to drink wine for one day, they drank heavily and began to quarrel. At length Satyawata slew Kritavarman, who had gone to the Pandava camp with Drona's son on the night of slaughter. The

Kritavarman's friends killed Satyaki and one of Krishna's sons. Krishna slew the rebels, but he could not quell the tumult and the fighting which ensued; fathers slew their sons, and sons their fathers, and kinsmen contended fiercely against kinsmen.

Then Krishna and Balarama left the city, and both died in the jungle. From Balarama's mouth issued a mighty snake, for he was the incarnation of the world serpent. . . . Krishna was mistaken for a gazelle by a hunter, who shot an arrow which pierced his foot at the only spot where he could be mortally wounded. He then departed to his heaven, which is called Goloka.

Ere Krishna had left Dwaraka he caused messengers to hasten for Arjuna, who came speedily, to find the women wailing for the dead. Then Vasudeva, father of Krishna, died, and Arjuna laid the body of the old man upon the pyre, and he was burned with four of his widows, who no longer desired to live. The bodies of Krishna and Balarama were cremated also.

Arjuna then set forth towards Indra-prastha with a remnant of the people; and when they had left Dwaraka, the sea rose up and swallowed the whole city, with those who had refused to depart from it. . . . Such was the end of the power of the Yadavas.

Deep gloom fell upon the Pandavas after this, and Vyasa, the sage, appeared before them, and revealed that their time had come to depart from the world.

Then Yudhishtira divided the kingdom. He made Parikshit, son of Abhimanyu, Rajah of Hastinapur; and Yuyutsu, the half-brother of Duryodhana, who had joined the Pandava army on the first day of the great war, was made Rajah of Hastinapur. He counselled them to live at peace one with another.

The Pandavas afterwards cast off their royal garments

and their jewels and put on the garb of hermits, and bright-eyed and faithful Draupadi did likewise. Yudhishtira departed first of all, and his brethren walked behind him one by one, and Draupadi went last of all, followed by a hound. They all walked towards the rising sun, and by the long circuitous path which leads to Mount Meru, through forests and over streams and across burning plains, never again to return.

One by one they fell by the way, all save Yudhishtira. Draupadi was the first to sink down, and Bhishma cried: "Why hath she fallen who hath never done wrong?"

Said Yudhishtira: "Her heart was bound up with Arjuna, and she hath her reward."

Sahadeva was next to fall, and then Nakula, and at length Yudhishtira heard the voice of Bhima crying in distress: "Lo! now the noble Arjuna hath fallen. What sin hath he committed?"

Said Yudhishtira: "He boasted confidently that he could destroy all his enemies in one day, and because he failed in his vow he hath fallen by the way."

The two surviving brothers walked on in silence; but at the time came when mighty Bhima sank down. He cried: "O Yudhishtira say, if thou canst tell, why I have fallen now."

Said Yudhishtira: "O wolf-bellied one, because of thy cursing and gluttony and thy pride thou hast fallen by the way."

Yudhishtira walked on, calm and unmoved, followed by his faithful hound. When he drew nigh to sacred Mount Meru, the world-spine, Indra, king of the gods, came forth to welcome him, saying: "Ascend, O resolute prince."

Said Yudhishtira: "Let my brethren who have fallen

by the way come with me also. I cannot enter heaven without them, O king of the gods. Let the fair and gentle princess come too; Draupadi hath been a faithful wife, and is worthy of bliss. Hear my prayer, O Indra, and have mercy."

Said Indra: "Thy brethren and Draupadi have gone before thee."

Then Yudhishtira pleaded that his faithful hound should enter heaven also; but Indra said: "Heaven is no place for those who are followed by hounds. Knowest thou not that demons rob religious ordinances of their virtues when dogs are nigh?"

Said Yudhishtira: "No evil can come from the noble. I cannot have joy if I desert this faithful friend."

Indra said: "Thou didst leave behind thy brethren and Draupadi. Why, therefore, canst thou not abandon thine hound?"

Said Yudhishtira: "I have no power to bring back to life those who have fallen by the way: there can be no abandonment of the dead."

As he spake, the hound was transformed, and behold Dharma, god of justice, stood by the rajah's side.

Dharma said: "O Yudhishtira, thou art indeed mine own son. Thou wouldst not abandon me, thy hound, because that I was faithful unto thee. Thine equal cannot be found in heaven."

Then Yudhishtira was transported to the city of eternal bliss, and there he beheld Duryodhana seated upon a throne. All the Kauravas were in heaven also, but the rajah could not find his brethren or fair Draupadi.

Said Indra: "Here thou shalt dwell, O Yudhishtira, in eternal bliss. Forget all earthly ties and attain to perfection; thy brethren have fallen short, therefore they sank by the way."

Indra spoke and said: "This is the beautiful and immortal one, who sprang from the altar to be thy wife, and these bright beings are her five children. Here is Dhritarashtra, who is now the king of the Gandharvas; there is Karna, son of Surya, the peerless archer who was slain by Arjuna. Here cometh towards thee Abhimanyu, son of Arjuna; he is now the star-bright companion of the lord of night. . . . Here are Pandu, thy sire, and Pritha, thy mother, now united in heaven. Behold! also, Yudhishtira, the wise Bhishma, whose place is with the Vasus round my throne: Drona sits with Dharma, god of wisdom. Here are all the peerless warriors who fell in battle and have won heaven by their valour and their constancy. So may all mortals rise to eternal bliss, casting off their mortal bodies and entering by the shining door of the celestial city, by doing kindly deeds, by uttering gentle words, and by enduring all suffering with patience. The holy life is prepared for all the sons of men."

Thus ends sublimely the story of the Great War of the Bharatas.

without avail.¹ It chanced, however, that one day there came to his court a Bráhma named Damana, and hospitable welcome was accorded him by the child-desiring Bhíma, for the seer was feasted in the hall with the rajah and his royal consort. Thereafter a boon was conferred upon the queen: she became the mother of one sweet girl, the pearl of maidens, who was named Damayanti, and of three noble sons, Dama, Danta, and the renowned Dam'ana, who all grew great and powerful.

When fair Damayanti had attained the full bloom of her beauty, she was unequalled throughout the world for her brilliance and for her grace. Upon the faultless and slender-waisted maiden there waited, as about Indra's queen, a hundred female slaves and a hundred virgin handmaids, and she shone among them, decked with jewels and rich ornaments, like to the goddess of beauty, unrivalled and without a peer. Never among the gods, or the Yakshas, or among mortal men was a maiden more fair ever heard of or ever beheld than soul-disturbing Damayanti, who disturbed the souls of the gods.

In presence of Bhíma's sweet daughter the high-born ladies of Vidarbha took joy in constantly praising Nala that tiger among rajahs. Likewise before Nishadha's king was Damayanti ever extolled because of her beauty. So it fell that, hearing much of each other's virtues, the silent passion of love was nurtured in both their hearts.

Impatient grew Nala as his love increased, and he was wont to wander in a grove within his palace garden musing secretly upon the maiden of faultless form. One day he saw disporting in the grounds a flock of beautiful swans with wings all flecked with gold. The rajah crept

¹ It was a religious necessity to have offspring. A son performed the funeral rites which rescued his father's soul from hell.

CHAPTER XX

Nala and Damayanti

A Noble Prince and Fair Princess—Swan Messengers of Love—A Romance—The Love sick Maiden—Indra and the Rishis—The Swayamvar—Gods Descend from Heaven—Nala's Mimicry—Interview with Damayanti—A Faithful Lover—Gathering of Rajahs—Gods Rejected by Damayanti—Choice of Nala—Wedding Gifts of the Gods—The Royal Marriage—Killing the Demon—Plot to Ruin Nala.

Once upon a time there reigned in Nishadha¹ a great rajah of choicest virtues whose name was Nala. He had great skill in taming steeds; he was a peerless archer and was devoted to truth. Nala commanded a mighty army: like to the sun was his splendour, and he was exalted over all other kings as is the monarch of the gods. He had, withal great piety, and he was deeply read in the Vedas, but he was ever a passionate lover of dice. Many a high-born lady spoke his praises, for he was generous of heart, and self-controlled, and the guardian of law. Indeed, Nala was a very present Manu.²

Now there ruled over the neighbouring state of Vidarbha the mighty rajah Bhīma, the terrible in strength who was likewise of choicest virtues. He was childless, and he yearned for children. For long he had been wont to perform many holy deeds intent upon offspring, but

¹ The south-eastern division of Central India.

² An incarnation of Manu, the first lawgiver.

without avail.¹ It chanced, however, that one day there came to his court a Bráhmaṇ named Damana, and hospitable welcome was accorded him by the child-desiring Bhima, for the seer was feasted in the hall with the rajah and his royal consort. Thereafter a boon was conferred upon the queen: she became the mother of one sweet girl, the pearl of maidens, who was named Damayanti, and of three noble sons, Dama, Danta, and the renowned Dam'ana, who all grew great and powerful.

When fair Damayanti had attained the full bloom of her beauty, she was unequalled throughout the world for her brilliance and for her grace. Upon the faultless and slender-waisted maiden there waited, as about Indra's queen, a hundred female slaves and a hundred virgin handmaids, and she shone among them, decked with jewels and rich ornaments, like to the goddess of beauty, unrivalled and without a peer. Never among the gods, or the Yakshas, or among mortal men was a maiden more fair ever heard of or ever beheld than soul-disturbing Damayanti, who disturbed the souls of the gods.

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Impatient grew Nala as his love increased, and he was wont to wander in a grove within his palace garden musing secretly upon the maiden of faultless form. One day he saw disporting in the grounds a flock of beautiful swans with wings all flecked with gold. The rajah crept

¹ It was a religious necessity to have offspring. A son performed the funeral rites which rescued his father's soul from hell.

forward softly and seized one, and much he marvelled to hear it cry out in human language.

"Slay me not, O gentle king, and to thee I will render a service, for I will praise thee in the presence of Damayanti so that ever after she shall think of no other mortal man but thee."

Immediately Nala set the bird at liberty, and it flew away rejoicing with its bright companions towards Vidarbha. When they reached the ladies' garden of Bhima's palace they settled down at the feet of Damayanti, who was reposing in the shade with her virgin handmaids. All the fair young women gazed in wonder on the swans, admiring their graceful forms and their plumage gleaming with gold, and ere long they began to pursue them among the trees. Then of a sudden the bird which Damayanti followed spoke to her in human language and said:

"Damayanti, hear! The noble king Nala dwells in Nishadha. Comely is he as a god, nor can his equal be found in the world. Thou art the pearl of women, and he is the pride of men. If thou wert wed to him, then would perfect beauty and noble birth be united. Blessed indeed would be the union of the peerless with the peerless."

Wondering, the maiden listened while the bird conversed thus strangely, and then she said: "Speak also unto Nala in this manner."

The swan made answer: "So be it," and thereupon took flight with the others to Nishadha, where it related unto Nala all that had taken place.

Ever after that day Damayanti ceased to live for herself alone; all her thoughts were given up to Nala. She desired most to sit apart in silent reverie; the bloom faded from her cheeks, and she grew dejected and melancholy. Indeed, the maiden yielded up her soul to sorrow,

and much she sighed in secret, gazing upward and meditating, for love had taken possession of her heart; nor did she find pleasure in sleep, or in gentle converse, or in merry banquets. In the midst of her broken slumbers she was wont to weep and cry out: "Oh, woe is me!"

The virgin handmaidens read her heart, and they went before her sire and told that his gentle daughter was pining for the monarch among men. When Bhishma heard this, he pondered deeply what should be done for Damayanti, and he perceived that her time for the swayamvara¹ had come. So he summoned all the high-born rajahs upon earth, saying: "O heroes of the world, come ye to the swayamvara."

Then did the whole land resound with the trampling of elephants and horses and the rumbling of chariots for the stately princes, followed by their armies, swarmed towards the court of Bhishma. By the strong lord of Virat-arbha were they welcomed with honour, and they sat upon their thrones.

Now it happened that at this time these two wise sages, Nārada and Pāravata,² ascended Mount Meru, the Swarga, the heaven of Indra, and they saluted the Cloud-compeller within his palace. The immortal lord bade them welcome, and asked how it fared with the world. Narada said it fared well with the world and with all the mighty kings. Then Indra spake, saying: "Where are all the royal heroes? Why do they not come hither to my honoured guests?"³

The wise sage made answer and said: "O Cloud-compeller, the great rajahs cannot appear before the

¹ The ceremony at which a princess made public choice of a husband from among a number of suitors gathered together.

² Two of the ten Rishis (saints) who were sons of Brāhma. Nārada was a messenger of the gods. Pāravata was his great rival.

³ Indra wonders that no battle-armed heroes are arriving at the Indian Valhalla.

because even now they are hastening one and all to the swayamvara of Damayanti, the renowned daughter of Bhima, the fairest woman upon earth. O slayer of drought demons, every king seeks to woo this maid of transcending beauty, for she is the pearl of all the world."

As Narada spake, the other gods drew nigh and listened to his stately utterance. Then together they exclaimed with rapture: "We also will go thither. . . ." In an instant they were hastening through the air in their chariots towards the city of Vidarbha to mingle with the wooers of Bhima's fair daughter.

Meanwhile Nala had set forth with joy, his heart full of love for Damayanti. The gods beheld him standing upon the surface of the earth with radiance like to the sun, and they arrested their course, gazing in mute wonder, for he was as comely as the god of love. Then, dropping down through the blue air, they hailed the stately hero, saying: "Do as we now beseech thee, O most excellent of princes; be thou the bearer of our message."

Nala adored the gods with folded hands and promised to obey their will, saying humbly: "Who are ye that now command my service?"

Indra spoke and said: "Lo! we are the dread guardians of the world. I am Indra, lord of heaven; yon is Agni, god of fire; here is Varuna, king of the waters; and there is Yama, lord of the dead.¹ Thou must inform Damayanti that we have come to woo her and say to her: '*Choose for thine husband one of the celestial beings*'."

Nala made answer with folded hands, saying: "Send me not, I entreat thee, upon this mission. How can I, who am enamoured with the maiden, plead aright the cause

¹ At the period the poem was composed there were only four "guardians"; later there were eight.

of another. In mercy spare me, ye gods—spare me this unwelcome service."

But the gods would not be moved from their purpose. They reminded Nala he had already promised to do their will, and they therefore urged him to set forth without delay lest he should belie his words.

Then the lord of Nishadha pleaded: "The palace of Bhīma is strongly guarded, and I cannot enter there."

Indra said: "Thou wilt indeed enter."

And lo! even as the god spake, Nala found himself standing before Damayanti in her secret bower.

The beautiful maiden was surrounded by her virgin band, and he gazed upon her faultless limbs and slender waist and into her entrancing eyes. Her shining beauty excelled even the tender rays of the moon. The love of Nala grew deeper and stronger as he looked upon the smiling princess; but he curbed his passion, remembering his mission.

All the maidens gazed with wonder and joy at the noble form, and in their hearts they exclaimed: "Oh! the splendid one; oh! the strong and mighty hero—who is he . . . Is he god, or Yaksha, or Gandharva?" But they spoke not a word, for they were made bashfully silent by reason of his beauty.

Nala smiled upon Damayanti, and first she smiled softly in return; then she exclaimed in her wonder: "What art thou that hast come hither like a celestial being to awaken all my love. Speak and tell, O sinless lord. How didst thou contrive to enter the palace unseen, for surely all the chambers are strongly guarded by stern orders of the king?"¹

The rajah made answer, saying: "O thou fairest one, know now that I am even Nala, and that I come hither a

¹ Evidently the *senana* system was in vogue prior to the Mohammedan conquest.

the messenger of the gods Indra and Agni, Varuna and Yama, and through their power have I entered here, unseen nor stayed, for it is their desire that I should say unto thee: '*Choose, O princess, for thine husband one of the celestial beings*'. Such is the purpose of my mission from the great world guardians. Having heard me, thou mayst decide as thou wilt."

Damayanti at once did homage to the gods. Then she smiled upon Nala and spoke, saying: "Lo! I am thine already, and whatsoever I possess is thine also. O give me thy love in return, Nala. For know that my heart's love was increased by the endearing words of the swan, and it is because of thee that the rajahs are all gathered here now. If thou wilt despise me, I will suffer death for thy sake by fire, or by water, or even by the noose¹."

The rajah made answer and said: "Wilt thou despise these, the gods, and choose for thine husband a mortal who is more lowly than the dust they walk upon? Let thy heart aspire to them. Remember, too, that the man who incurs the anger of the world's dread guardians will meet with certain death. From such a fate oh shield me, thou fairest one! . . . So choose one of the perfect gods, and thou shalt have robes unsullied by dust, garlands that never fade, and celestial joy without end."

Trembling, and with tear-dimmed eyes, Damayanti said: "I do homage with due humility to all the gods, but oh! I desire thee for my husband, thee and thee only."

But Nala spake, saying: "I am charged with the mission of the celestial beings, and cannot plead for myself now. But afterwards I will come to claim thee,

¹ Death by hanging was not regarded as a special disgrace.

and will speak boldly, O bright one, so remember me in thine heart."

The maiden smiled through her tears. "Ah!" she said, "I see now a way of escape. . . . When thou comest to the *swayamvara*, enter thou together with the gods, and I will name thee as mine own, so that no sin may be charged against thee."

Then Nala returned to the gods, who waited him eagerly, and he told them all that the maiden had said, word for word. "In thy wisdom," he added, "thou wilt judge of what remains, O ye excelling gods."

When at length the day of happy omen, the day of the *swayamvara*, arrived, Bhīma summoned at noontide all the love-sick rajahs, and they passed through the court of golden columns and under the bright portal arch, and entered the Hall of State like to lions on the mountains. The rajahs were then seated on their thrones, adorned with garlands and with dangling ear gems. The arms of some were robust and powerful like the battle mace; those of others were delicate and smooth as a serpent. With profuse and flowing hair, shapely noses, and arching eyebrows, the faces of these great lords were radiant as the stars in heaven. As a mountain cave is full of tigers, so was Bhīma's great Hall full of rajah tigers on that day.

When Damayanti entered in state, every eye and every soul was entranced by her dazzling beauty; all these lords of earth gazed upon her with unmoving eyes. . . . The name of each rajah was proclaimed in turn, and Nala, looking about her, was suddenly stricken with dismay, for she perceived that there were present five Nalas who were undistinguishable in form and attire one from another. The four gods who desired to win her had each assumed the likeness of her beloved one.

Whichsoever of these she gazed upon, he seemed to her rajah, and in her secret heart she wailed: "How can I discern Nala among the celestial beings?"

In her sore distress the trembling maiden folded hands and did homage before the gods, to whom she prayed, saying:

"When I heard the sweet words of the swa-
I pledged my heart to Nala. I adjure thee by the
truth, O ye gods. Oh! reveal my lord.

"From my faith I have never swerved either
word or by deed. I adjure thee by this truth,
ye all-knowing Powers. Oh! reveal my lord.

"The gods have destined that Nala should
mine husband. I adjure thee by this truth. O
reveal my lord.

"The vow which I so pledged to Nala is holy
and I must ever keep it. I adjure thee by this
truth. Oh! reveal my lord.

"O ye mighty ones, ye guardians of the world,
assume now your forms divine, so that I may know
Nala, the monarch of men."

The gods heard the sad maiden's piteous prayer and
 marvelled greatly. They perceived that her resolve was
 firm, that she was constant in truth and in love, and
 was holy and wise, and that she remained faithful to her
 lord. So they revealed the tokens of their greatness.
 . . . Then Damayanti was able to discern the four
 celestial beings because their skins were without moisture
 and their eyes never winked, there was no dust on
 their garlands and their feet did not touch the earth.

*Deities cast no shadows, they never perspired, nor did their feet touch the ground
 walking. Their eyes never winked.*

She also knew Nala because he cast a shadow; there was dust on his raiment, and his garland was beginning to fade; drops of moisture stood on his skin, and his eyelids moved.

Gazing first upon the celestial beings and then upon him who was her heart's desire, Damayanti named Nala as her lord. She modestly touched the hem of his garment and threw round his neck a wreath of bright flowers, and thus chose him for her husband.

All the rivals of Nala uttered cries of sorrow, but the gods and the sages exclaimed aloud: "Well done! Well done!" and honoured the lord of Nishadha.

Nala spake in his joy to fair Damayanti, saying: "Since thou, O maiden with serene smile, hast chosen me for thine husband in the presence of the gods, know that I will be a faithful consort who will ever take delight in thy words. I am thine, and so long as my life endures I will be thine only."

So did the lord of Nishadha pledge his faith, and the heart of the maiden was made glad. The happy pair then did homage before the gods, and these resplendent guardians of the earth bestowed, in their joy, eight surpassing gifts upon Nala. Indra gave him power to behold the godhead in the sacrifice, and power to walk unhindered by any obstacle wheresoever he desired; Agni gave him power over fire, and power over the three worlds;¹ Varuna gave him power over water, and power to obtain fresh garlands at will; and Yama gave him subtle skill in preparing food, and eminence in every virtue. Each of the gods also conferred his double blessing upon Nala, and thereafter they departed.

All the rajahs wondered greatly when they beheld the maiden's choice confirmed in this manner, and they

¹ Heaven, earth, and the underworld.

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¹ Heaven, earth, and the underworld.

went away as they came, with joy, and returned to their own domains.

Bhima rejoiced greatly when the happy marriage was celebrated in pomp and with state, and he bade adieu with great courtesy when that great lord Yudhishtira, after his sojourn at Vidarbha, set out on his way to his native city with the pearl of women who had won him.

Now it chanced that when the gods had their swayamvara they met in the midst of the blue sky the demon of evil, who was accompanied by the evil spirit Dwápara. Indra, the slayer of giants, said: "Whither art thou going with Dwápara, O Kali?"

Kali made answer: "We are hastening to the swayamvara, for it is my desire to obtain Damayanti as my bride."

Smiling, the king of gods spake, saying: "The marriage is now arranged and ended, for lo! the fair Damayanti has chosen Nala for her husband in our presence."

When he heard these words, the heart of Kali was made angry, and he exclaimed: "Since she has preferred a mortal in presence of the celestial beings, let her be her own doom."

But the gods said: "Know thou that our consent was freely given, because Damayanti has chosen for her husband one endowed with all the virtues, and equal to all the guardians of the world. If anyone should curse Nala, the curse will recoil fatally, and the person will be cast into the torments of the dark lake of the dead. Having spoken thus, the bright deities ascend to the heavens."

Then said Kali to Dwápara: "I cannot now resist my fierce wrath. Lo! I will be avenged upon Nala."

¹ Dowson regards the demon Kali as the personification of the Kali Yuga.

I will enter his body, and he will be bereft of his kingdom and of his bride. Thou, Dwapara, wilt enter the dice and give me thine aid."

So was a malignant compact arranged between the demon of evil and his darksome ally, and together they went towards Nishadha to haunt the stately palace of Nala, waiting for the fatal moment.

CHAPTER XXI

Wanderings in the Forest

Nala Possessed by a Demon—A Brother's Challenge—The Dice—The Rajah's Stakes—Alarm of Citizens—Damayanti's Grief of Children—A Kingdom Gambled away—The Failed King—His Wife—Departure to the Forest—Damayanti Deserted—Seized by a Tiger—Rescued by a Huntsman—A Terrible Curse—Forest Perils—A Tiger—The Holy Mountain—Prophecy of Hermits—Address to the Tree—The Caravan—Disasters of a Night—Damayanti's Flight to C

For twelve bright years Nala and Damayanti lived together. The great rajah ruled his people justly, offered up every sacrifice to the gods, and he gave numerous gifts to holy men. Fair Damayanti became mother of a beautiful daughter, who was named Sena, and of a comely son, who was named Indrasekara. They were the blessings of life showered upon the blissful pair.

But at length there came a day when, after performing an unclean act, Nala sipped holy water and worshipped with unwashed feet.¹ The watchful Kali seized this fatal opportunity, and straightway entered the king's mind and possessed his inmost soul. Then that evil demon summoned Push'kara, the brother of Nala, saying: "Come now and throw dice with the king. I will give thee aid, so that thou wilt be enabled to win the whole kingdom for thyself."

¹ The ceremony of purification included the sipping of water and the washing of the feet.

Pushkara at once challenged his brother, whereupon the wicked spirit Dwapara entered the dice.

Nala gave ready consent to take part in the game of hazard, for he was swayed by evil Kali. Then the two rivals began to play together in the presence of Damayanti.

The great rajah staked his wealth, and he was worsted; he staked his golden treasures and he staked his chariots, and still he was worsted; he staked his rich attire, and he continued to lose. The passion for dice had possessed Nala like to sudden madness, and it was in vain that his friends endeavoured to restrain him.

In time rumours of dire happenings went abroad through the city, whereupon the rajah's faithful subjects accompanied by high counsellors of state, assembled at the palace gate with desire to prevail upon him to cease playing. They urged upon Damayanti to intervene, and the spirit-broken daughter of Bhima approached Nala in anguish and in dismay, and with tear-choking voice she spoke to him, saying: "All thy subjects are gathered without, for they cannot endure the thought that misfortune should fall upon thee."

Nala heard her, but answered not a word, because his soul was clouded by evil Kali. Then the wise men said, "It is not he;" and they departed to their homes in sorrow and in shame. . . .

So the play went on; daily it went on through many weary months, and Nala was always worsted.

When, in the end, Damayanti perceived that all the treasures were lost, she sent for the faithful charioteer Vārshneya, and spoke to him, saying: "Hasten now and yoke Nala's speedy and much-loved steeds, and place my children in the chariot. Then drive quickly to the city of my kindred and leave them in care of my father, th

Tortured by hunger, the fallen king at length beheld on the ground a flock of birds with gold-flecked wings, and he said in his heart: "Now I will make me a welcome feast."

So he crept forward and flung over them his single garment; but they rose in the air, carrying it away with them. As they went they cried out mockingly in human language and said: "Know now, O foolish king, that we are the dice. We came hither on purpose to despoil thee utterly, for so long as thou hadst left a single garment our joy was incomplete."

Thereupon Nala spoke to Damayanti in his anguish, saying: "O blameless one, by whose anger have I been driven from my kingdom and rendered thus unable to procure any food? Listen now to my counsel. The roads diverge here before us, and one leads southward past the caves of holy hermits, which are stored with food, towards the kingdom of thy royal sire."

Anxiously did Nala point out the way and urge upon Bhima's fair daughter to take refuge in Vidarbha ere he would enter the great forest.

Weighed down by her heavy sorrow, Damayanti made answer with tear-choking voice: "Alas! thy words of counsel cause my heart to break and my limbs to fail me. How can I leave thee all alone in trackless forest when thou hast lost thy kingdom and thy riches, and whilst thou art athirst and tortured by hunger? Rather let me comfort thee, O my husband, when in thy grief, and famine-stricken as thou now art, thou dost ponder wearily over thy lost happiness, for in truth have wise physicians said that a wife is the only balsam and the only healing herb for her husband's sorrow."

Said Nala: "Thou hast spoken truly. There is indeed no medicine for a stricken man like to his wife's

wept bitterly, saying: "Ah! thou dost sleep on the bare hard ground whom neither sun nor storm hath ever used roughly. O my loved one, thou hast ever awakened to smile. How wilt thou fare when thou dost discover that thy lord hath abandoned thee in the midst of the perilous forest? . . . May sun and wind and the spirits of the wood protect thee, and may thou be shielded ever by thine own great virtue!"

Then the distracted rajah, prompted by Kali again, hastened away; but his heart was torn by his love, which drew him back. . . . So time and again he came and went, like to a swing, backward and forward, until in the end the evil spirit conquered him, and he departed from Damayanti, who moaned fitfully in her sleep; and he plunged into the depths of the forest.

Ere long the fair princess awoke, and when she perceived that she was all alone she uttered a piteous scream and cried out: "Oh! where art thou, my king, my lord, my sole protector? . . . I am lost; oh! I am undone! I am helpless and alone in the perilous wood. . . . Ah, now thou art but deceiving me. Do not mock me, my lord. Art thou hidden there among the bushes? Oh, speak! . . . Why dost thou not make answer? . . . I do not sorrow for myself only. I cannot well endure that thou shouldst be alone, that thou shouldst thirst and be an hungered and very weary, and without me to give thee comfort. . . ."

So she wailed as she searched through the forest for Nala, now casting herself upon the ground, now sitting to pine in silence, and anon crying out in her grief. At length she said: "Oh, may he who causeth Nala to suffer endure even greater agony than he endureth, and may he live for ever in darkness and in misery!"

Hither and thither she wandered, seeking her lord.

countless birds and fierce robbers. She saw buffaloes and wild boars feeding, and the fierce and awesome forms that were there also—serpents and giants and terrible demons . . . But, protected by her virtue, she wandered on alone without fear. Her sole anxiety was for Nala, and she wept for him, crying: “Ah! where art thou? O blameless one, remember now thy vows and thy plighted faith. Remember the words which the gold-winged swan addressed unto thee. . . . Am I not thy loved one? . . . Oh! why dost thou not make answer in this dark and perilous forest? The savage beasts are gaping to devour me. Why art thou not near to save? . . . I am weak and pallid and dust-stained, and have need of thee, my protector. . . . Whom can I ask for Nala? The tiger is before me, the king of the forest, and I am not afraid. I address him, saying: ‘Oh! I am lonely, and wretched and sorrowful, seeking for my exiled husband. If thou hast seen him, console me; if thou hast not seen him, devour me, and set me free from this misery.’ . . . But the tiger turns down to the river bank, and I wander onward towards the holy mountain, the monarch of hills.

“‘Hear me!’ I cry. I salute thee, O Mountain. . . . I am a king’s daughter and the consort of a king, the illustrious lord of Nishadha, the pious, the faultless one, who is courageous as the elephant. . . . Hast thou seen my Nala, O mighty Mountain? . . . Ah! why dost thou not answer me? . . . Comfort thou me now as if I were thine own child. . . . Oh! shall I ever behold him again, and ever hear again his honey-sweet voice, like music, saying: ‘Daughter of Vidarbha,’ while it doth soothe all my pain with its blessed sound? . . .”

Having thus addressed the mountain, Damayanti turned northward and wandered on for three days and three nights. Then she reached a holy grove, and

and ever was she heard crying: "Alas! O my husband."

Suddenly a great serpent rose up in its wrath, coiled itself round her fair body. . . .

"Oh! my guardian," she cried, "I am now in peril. The serpent hath seized me. Why art thou not here? . . . Ah! who will comfort thee now in thy sorrow? blameless Nala?"

As she lamented thus, a passing huntsman heard her cries; he broke through the jungle and beheld Damayanti in the coils of the serpent. . . . Nimble he sprang forward and with a single blow smote off the serpent's head, and thus rescued the beautiful lady from her awesome peril. Then he washed her body and gave her food, and she was refreshed.

"Who art thou, O fair-eyed one?" he asked. "I do not dost thou wander thus alone in the perilous wood?"

Damayanti of faultless form thereupon related to the huntsman the story of her sorrow. As she spoke, the frail heart was moved by her great beauty, and he answered her in amorous words with whining voice. . . . Perceiving his evil intent, she was roused to fierce anger. Her husband was her sole defence, and she cursed him so that he immediately fell down dead like to a tree that has been smitten by lightning and is suddenly blasted.¹

Freed thus from the savage huntsman of wild ways, the lotus-eyed Damayanti wandered on through the forest, which resounded everywhere with the song of the cricket. All around her were trees of every form and name, and she beheld shady arbours, deep valleys, wooded hill summits, and lakes and pools, loud rushing waterfalls, and great flowing rivers. The forest was drear and appalling: it was full of lions and tigers.

¹ The power of a curse is illustrated in Southey's *Curse of Kehama*.

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Suddenly a great serpent rose up in its wrath, coiled itself round her fair body. . . .

"Oh! my guardian," she cried, "I am now in peril. The serpent hath seized me. Why art thou silent? . . . Ah! who will comfort thee now in thy sorrow, blameless Naga?"

As she lamented thus, a passing huntsman heard her cries; he broke through the jungle and beheld the lady in the coils of the serpent. . . . Nimble he was, and with a single blow smote off the serpent's head, and thus rescued the beautiful lady from her awesome peril. Then he washed her body and gave her food, and she was refreshed.

"Who art thou, O fair-eyed one?" he asked. "Dost thou wander thus alone in the perilous wood?"

Damayanti of faultless form thereupon related to the huntsman the story of her sorrow. As she spoke, his frail heart was moved by her great beauty, and he began to speak amorous words with whining voice. . . . Perceiving his evil intent, she was roused to fierce anger. Her husband was her sole defence, and she cursed him so that he immediately fell down dead like to a tree that is smitten by lightning and is suddenly blasted.¹

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Having thus addressed the mountain, Damayan turned northward and wandered on for three days and three nights. Then she reached a holy grove, and

entered it humbly and without fear. She beheld the cells of hermits and their bright sacred fires. The holy men were struck with wonder by reason of her beauty, and they bade her welcome, saying: "Art thou a goddess of the wood, or of the mountain, or of the river? O speak and tell."

Damayanti made answer: "I am not a goddess of the wood, or a mountain spirit, or yet a river nymph, but a mortal woman."

Then she related to the holy men the story of her sorrow and her wandering, and these seers spoke to her and said: "A time cometh soon, a time of beauty, when thou wilt again behold Nala in splendour and sin-reless, ruling over his people."

When they had spoken thus, all the holy men vanished, and their sacred fires vanished also. Damayanti stood a while in silent wonder, and in her heart she said: "Have I seen a vision? . . ." Then she went towards another region.

Lamenting for Nala, the fair one came to a beautiful asoka tree¹: its green branches were gemmed with gleaming fruit, and were melodious with the songs of birds. "O happy tree," she cried, "take away all my grief. . . . Say, hast thou beheld my Nala, the slayer of his enemies, my beloved lord? Oh! hast thou seen my one love, with smooth, bright skin, wandering alone in the forest? Answer me, O blessed Asoka, so that I may depart from thee in joy. Ah! hear and speak thou happy tree. . . ."

So, wailing in her deep anguish, Damayanti moved round the asoka. Then she went towards a lonelier and more fearsome region. . . . She passed many a river and

¹ A (not) asoka (sorrow). This beautiful tree has exquisitely coloured and abundant blossom, varying from rich orange red to primrose yellow. It is sacred to Siva.

many mountains, and she saw numerous birds and deer as she wandered on and on, searching for her lost lord.

At length she beheld a great caravan of merchants. Ponderous elephants and eager camels, prancing horses and rumbling cars came through a river. The river banks were fringed by cane and tangled undergrowth; the curlew called aloud there, and the osprey; red geese were clamouring; turtles were numerous, as were the fish and the serpents likewise. All the noble animals of the caravan came splashing noisily across the ford.

The great concourse of travellers stared with wonder on the slender-waisted, maniac-like woman, clad in but half a garment, smeared with dust and pale and sorrowful. Her long hair all matted and miry. Some there were who fled from her in fear. But others took pity and said "Who art thou, O lady, and what seekest thou in the lonely forest? Art thou a goddess of the mountain, or of the forest, or of the plain? . . . We pray for thy protection; be mindful of our welfare so that we may prosper upon our journey."

Then Damayanti told the story of her mistortune and sorrow, and all the travellers gathered round about to hear — boys and young men and grey-haired sages. "Oh! have you beheld my lord, my Nala?" she cried unto them.

The captain of the band answered her "Nay"; and she asked him whither the caravan was bound, whereat he said: "We are going towards the realm of Chedi, over which Subáhu is king." When the merchants resumed their journey, Damayanti went with them.

Through the forest they travelled a long distance and at eventide they reached the green shore of a beautiful wide lake which sparkled with bright lotus

blooms.¹ The camp was pitched in the middle of grove. Gladly did the men bathe with their animals in the delicious, ice-cool waters.

At midnight all slept. . . . In the deep silence of wild forest elephants, with moisture oozing from temples,² came down to drink from the gurgling which flowed nigh to the camp. When they scent tame elephants lying crouched in slumber, they trum aloud, and of a sudden charged ponderously and felt them like to mountain peaks tumbling into the beneath. . . . Trees and tents were thrown down and trampled through the camping ground, and the train awoke panic-stricken, crying: "Oh! Alas! Ah! Some fled through the forest; others, blind with stood gasping with wonder, and the elephants slew. The camp was scattered in the dire confusion; animals were gored; men overthrew one another deavouring to escape; many shrieked in terror, a few climbed trees. Voices were heard calling: "a fire!" and merchants screamed, "Why fly away speedily? Save the precious jewels, O ye cowards."

Amidst the tumult and the slaughter Dama awoke, trembling with fear, and she made swift escape nor suffered a wound. In the deep forest she came to the few men who had found refuge, and she heard them say one to another:

"What deed have we done to bring this misfortune upon us? Have we forgotten to adore Manibhadra³, high king of the Yakshas? Worshipped we not, ere we set forth, the dread spirits which bring disasters?"

¹ They are coloured red, white, and blue.

² *Rattling elephants.* The seasonal juice is odorous, and issues from minute pores on each side of the elephant's temples.

³ Manibhadra, the demi god, was worshipped by travellers, and resembles Kumbhakar, the god of wealth.

it doomed that all omens should be belied? How hath it come that such a disaster hath befallen us?"

Others who had been bereft of their kindred and their wealth, and were in misery, said: "Who was she—that ill-omened, maniac-eyed woman who came amongst us? In truth she seemed scarcely human. Surely it is by reason of her evil power that disaster hath befallen us. Ah! she is a witch, or she is a sorceress, or mayhap a demon. . . . Without doubt she is the cause of all our woes. . . . Would that we could find her—oh the evil destroyer! Oh the curse of our host! . . . Let us slay the murderess with clods and with stones, with canes and with staves, or else with our fists. . . ."¹

When the terrified and innocent Damayanti heard these fearsome threats, she fled away through the trees lamenting her fate, and wailing: "Alas! alas! my terrible doom doth haunt me still. Misfortune dogs my foot steps. . . . I have no memory of any sin of thought or deed—of any wrong done by me to living beings. Per chance, oh, alas! I did sin in my former life, and am now suffering due punishment. . . . For I suffer, indeed. I have lost my husband; my kingdom is lost; I have lost my kindred; my noble Nala has been taken from me and I am far removed from my children, and I wander alone in the wood of serpents."

When morning broke, the sorrowful queen met with some holy Brahmans who had escaped the night's disaster, and she went with them towards the city of Ched

The people gazed with wonder on Damayanti when she walked through the streets with her dust-smearred body and matted hair. The children danced about her as she wandered about like to a maniac, so miserable and weak and emaciated.

¹ A curious glimpse of Hindu ideas regardng demi-gods or demons.

It chanced that the sorrowing woman came ni the royal palace. The mother of the king looked from a window, and beheld her and said: "Haster bid this poor wanderer to enter. Although stricken half-clothed she hath, methinks, the beauty of Is long-eyed queen. Let her have refuge from those st men."

Damayanti was then led before the queen mother spoke gently, saying: "Although bowed down with thou art beautiful of form. Thou fearest not any Who art thou so well protected by thine own chasti

Bhima's daughter wept, lamenting her fate, and re all that had befallen her, but did not reveal who she Then the queen mother said: "Dwell thou here with and our servants shall go in quest of thy husband."

Damayanti said: "O mother of heroes, if I abide with thee I must eat not of food remnants, nor do me service, nor can I hold converse with any man save holy Brahmans who promise to search for my husband

The royal lady made answer: "As thou desireth let it be." Then she spake to Sunanda, her daughter saying: "This lady will be to thee a handmaiden and friend. She is of thine own age and thy worthy partner. Be happy together."

At these words the Princess Sunanda was made glad and she led the strange woman unto her own abode where sat all her virgin handmaidens.

There Damayanti dwelt for a time, waiting for her lost husband.

CHAPTER XXII

Nala in Exile

Nala's Wanderings—The Magic Fire—King of Serpents Rescued—Nala Transformed—His Service as a Charioteer—Life in Ayodhya—The Evening Song of Sorrow—Search for Damayanti—How she was Discovered—Her Departure from Chedi—Search for Nala—A Woman's Faith—Journey to the Swayamvara—The Tree Wonder—Demon Leaves Nala's Body—The Coming of the Chariot—Damayanti's Vow

Soon after Nala had fled into the forest depths, deserting the faithful Damayanti, he beheld a great fire which blazed furiously. As he drew nigh he heard a voice crying over and over again from the midst of the sacred flames: "Hasten, Nala! Oh, hasten, Nala, and come hither!"

Now, Agni had given Nala power over fire, so crying: "Have no fear," he leapt through the flames. . . . In the space within that blazing circle he beheld the king of serpents lying coiled up in a ring with folded hands and unable to move.¹ "Lo! I am Karkotaka," the serpent said, "and am suffering this punishment because that I deceived the holy sage Nārada, who thereupon cursed me, saying: 'Thou wilt remain here in the midst of the flames until Nala cometh nigh to free thee from my curse'. . . . So do I lie without power to move. O mighty rajah, if thou wilt rescue me even now, I will reward thee abundantly with my noble friendship, and help thee to attain great

¹ This serpent was a demi-god with human face and hands. It ruled its kind in the underworld, and recalls the Egyptian king serpent in the story of the shipwrecked sailor. —See *Egyptian Myth and Legend*. It is also called Varuka and Shesha.

happiness. *Oh lift me all speedily from out of this fiery place, thou noble rajah!*"

When he had spoken thus, Karkotaka, king of the serpents, shrank to the size of a man's finger, whereupon Nala uplifted and carried him safely through the flames to a cool and refreshing space without.

The serpent then said: "Now walk on and count thy steps, so that good fortune may be assured to thee."

Nala walked nine steps, but ere he could take the tenth the serpent bit him, whereat the rajah was suddenly transformed into a misshapen dwarf with short arms.

Then Karkotaka said: "Know now that I have thus changed thy form so that no man may know thee. My poison, too, will cause unceasing anguish to the evil one who possesseth thy soul; he will suffer greatly until he shall set thee free from thy sorrow. So wilt thou be delivered from thine enemy, O blameless one. . . . My poison will harm thee not, and henceforth, by reason of my power, thou wilt have no need to fear the wild boar, or any foeman, or a Brahman, or the sages. Ever in battle thou wilt be victorious. . . . Now, go thy way, and be called 'Váhuka, the charioteer'. Hasten thou unto the city of Ayodhya¹ and enter the service of the royal Rajah Rituparna, the skilful in dice. Thou wilt teach him how to subdue horses, and he will impart to thee the secret of dice. Then wilt thou again have joy. Sorrow not, therefore, for thy wife and thy children will be restored unto thee, and thou wilt regain thy kingdom."

Then the serpent gave unto Nala a magic robe, saying: "When it is thy desire to be as thou wert, O king, think of me and put on this garment, and thou wilt immediately resume thy wonted form."

Having spoken thus, the king of serpents vanished from sight. Thereupon Nala went towards the city of Ayodhyá, and he stood in the presence of the royal Rajah Rituparna, unto whom he spoke thus: "My name is Váhuká. I am a tamer of steeds, nor is my equal to be found in the world; and I have surpassing skill in cooking viands."

The rajah welcomed him and took him into his service, saying: "Thou shalt cause my horses to be fleet of foot. Be thou master of mine own steed, and thy reward will be great."

He was well pleased and gave unto Váhuka for comrades Várshneya, who had been in Nala's service, and Jívala also. So the transformed rajah abode a long time at Ayodhya, and every evening, sitting alone, he sang a single verse:

Where is she all worn but faithful, weary, thirsty, hung'ring too?
Thinks she of her foolish husband? . . . Doth another man her
woo?

Ever thus he sang, and his comrades heard him and wondered greatly. So it came that one evening Jívala spoke to Nala and said: "For whom do you sorrow thus, O Váhuka? I pray you to tell me. Who is the husband of this lady?"

Nala answered him with sad voice and said: "Once there was a peerless lady, and she had a husband of weakly will. And lo! as they wandered in a forest together, he fled from her without cause, and yet he sorrowed greatly. Ever by day and by night is he consumed by his overwhelming grief, and brooding ever, he sings this melancholy song. He is a weary wanderer in the wide world, and his sorrow is without end; it is never still. . . . His wife wanders all forlorn in

happiness. Oh lift me all speedily from out of this evil place, thou noble rajah!"

When he had spoken thus, Karkotaka, king of the serpents, shrank to the size of a man's finger, whereupon Nala uplifted and carried him safely through the flames to a cool and refreshing space without.

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The Brahman then approached Damayanti and said: "I am Sudeva. Thy royal sire and thy mother and thy children are well. . . . A hundred Brahmans have been sent forth throughout the world to search for thee, O noble lady."

Damayanti heard him and wept.

The Princess Sunanda spoke to her queen mother, saying: "Lo! our handmaid weeps because that the Brahman hath spoken unto her. . . . Who she is we shall speedily know now."

Then the queen mother conducted the holy man to her chambers and spoke to him, saying: "Who is she—this mysterious and noble stranger, O holy man?"

Sudeva spoke in answer: "Her name is Damayanti, and her sire is King Bhima, lord of Vidarbha. Her husband is Nala. . . . From birth she has had a dark beauty spot like to a lotus between her fair eyebrows. Although it is covered with dust, I perceived it, and so I knew her. By Brahma was this spot made as the sign of his beauty-creating power."

The queen mother bade Sudeva to remove the dust from the beauty spot of Bhima's daughter. When this was done, it came forth like to the unclouded moon in heaven, and the royal lady and her daughter wept together and embraced the fair Damayanti¹.

Then the queen mother said: "Lo! thou art mine own sister's daughter, O beauteous one. Our sire is the Rajah Sudâman who reigns at Dasârna². . . . Once I beheld thee as a child. . . . Ah! ask of me whatsoever thou desirest and it shall be thine."

The words for moon in A. Saxon and German are masculine; in Gaelic they are feminine.

¹ The Gaelic Diarmid had similarly a beauty spot on his forehead. Women who saw it immediately fell in love with him.

² Dasârna, "Ten Forts", is the south-eastern part of Central Hindustan.

"Alas! I am a banished mother," Damayanti said with fast-flowing tears. "Permit me, therefore, to return unto my children who have been orphaned of mother and sire."

The queen mother said: "Be it so."

Then Damayanti was given an army to guard her on her journey towards her native city, and she was welcomed there by all her kindred and friends with great rejoicing. King Bhima rewarded Sudeva with a thousand kine, and a town's revenue for a village.¹

When Damayanti was embraced by her mother she said: "Now our chief duty is to bring home Nala."

The queen wept, and spoke to her husband, the royal Bhima, saying: "Our daughter still mourns heavily for her lost lord and cannot be comforted."

Then Bhima urged the Brahmans to search for Nala, offering munificent reward when that he should be found. Damayanti addressed these holy men ere they departed and said unto them: "Wheresoever thou goest, speak this my message over and over again:

"Whither art thou gone, O gambler, who didst sever my garment in twain? Thou didst leave thy loved one as she lay slumbering in the savage wood. Lo! she is awaiting thy return: by day and by night she sitteth alone, consumed by her grief. Oh hear her prayer and have compassion, thou noble hero, because that she ever weepeth for thee in the depths of her despair!"

So the holy men went through every kingdom and every city repeating the message of Damayanti over and over again; but when they began to return one by one, each told with sadness that his quest had been in vain.

¹ A Brâhman village settlement.

Then came unto Vidarbha that Brahman, the wise Parnada, who had sojourned a time in the city of Ayodhya. He addressed the daughter of Bhima, saying: "Unto Rituparna I spake regarding thy husband, repeating thy message, but he answered not a word. So I went out from before him. Thereafter there came to me his charioteer, a man with short arms and misshapen body. His name is Váhuka, and he is skilled in driving the swift chariot and in preparing viands. He sorrowed greatly, and with melancholy voice spoke unto me these words :

'In the excess of her sorrow a noble woman will compose herself and remain constant, and so win heaven by her virtues. She is protected by the breastplate of her chastity, and will suffer no harm. Nor will she yield to anger although she be deserted by her lord, whose robe the birds have taken away, leaving him in sore distress. She will not be moved to wrath against her husband, the sorrow-stricken and famine-wasted, who hath been bereft of his kingdom and despoiled of happiness.'

When I heard the stranger's speech I came speedily hither to repeat it unto thee."

Damayanti at once went and spoke to her mother privately, for she was assured that Vahuka, the charioteer, was her royal lord. Then she gave of her wealth to the Brahman, saying: "Thou wilt get more if Nala returns home." The wise Parnada was weary with travel, and he departed to his own village.

Neither Damayanti nor her mother made known unto King Bhima their discovery nor yet their immediate purpose. Secretly the wife of Nala spake to Sudeva and said: "Hasten thou unto the city of Ayodhya, and appear before the Rajah Rituparna as if thou hadst come by chance, and say unto him: 'Once again is the daughter of Bhima to hold

"Alas! I am a banished mother," Damayanti said with fast-flowing tears. "Permit me, therefore, to return unto my children who have been orphaned of mother and sire."

The queen mother said: "Be it so."

Then Damayanti was given an army to guard her on her journey towards her native city, and she was welcomed there by all her kindred and friends with great rejoicing. King Bhima rewarded Sudeva with a thousand kine, and a town's revenue for a village.¹

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"Whither art thou gone, O gambler, who didst sever thy garment in twain? Thou didst leave thy loved one as she lay slumbering in the savage wood. Lo! she is awaiting return: by day and by night she sitteth alone, her grief. Oh hear her prayer and have noble hero, because that she ever depths of her despair!"

So the holy men
every city repeat
over again; but
each told with

So the rajah marvelled and thought, while he rejoiced in the matchless skill of the misshapen charioteer.

Swiftly they went. Over hills and rivers and over forests and lakes the chariot glided like to a bird through the air. . . . Of a sudden the rajah's robe was swept away, and he cried to the charioteer, saying: "Stop at instant, so that Varshneya may hasten back and recover my garment."

Nala paused not, and said: "Thy robe is now five miles behind us, and we cannot wait to recover it."

So they went on with all speed. Ere long Rituparna beheld a lofty fruit tree, named Vibhítak, and he said to Vahuka: "Now, skilful charioteer, thou shalt perceive my ability in numbers. No single mind is accomplished in every kind of knowledge. On two branches of yonder fruit tree are fifty million leaves and two thousand and ninety-five berries."

Vahuka said: "The leaves and the fruit are invisible to me. But I will tear off a branch and count the berries while Varshneya doth hold the bridle."

"But," urged the rajah, "we cannot pause on our journey."

Vahuka said: "Thou mayst stay with me, or thou canst let Varshneya drive thee at full speed."

Then the rajah spoke soothingly, saying: "O matchless charioteer! I cannot go on without thee to Vidarbha. I trust in thee. If thou wilt promise that we will reach the city ere night falls, I will do even as you desire."

The transformed Nala made answer: "I will indeed make haste when I have counted the berries."

So the horses were drawn up, and Nala tore a branch from the tree. Having counted the berries, he found they were in number even as the rajah had said, and he

exclaimed: "Wonderful, indeed, is thy power, O Rituparna! Fain would I know thy secret."

Now the rajah was eager to proceed on his way, and he said: "I know the secret of the dice, and am therefore skilled in numbers."

"Then," said Nala, "if thou wilt impart to me the secret, I will give thee knowledge in steeds."

Rituparna made answer thereat: "So be it;" and he forthwith informed the charioteer in the science of dice.

Now when Nala grew skilful in dice, Kali immediately passed out of his body, and Nishadha's fallen king vomited forth the serpent poison and was made weak with the struggle. Released from the venom, Kali resumed his wonted form, but he was beheld by Nala alone, who sought to curse him.

In his terror, the evil demon folded his hands and said: "Do not injure me, O king; and I will give thee matchless fame. . . . Know thou that Damayanti cursed me heavily in her wrath when thou didst desert her in the forest, and I have ever since endured great agony. Night and day, too, have I been scorched by the poison of the king of serpents. . . . Now I seek thy pity. I come to thee that thou mayst be my refuge. Lo! I promise, if thou wilt not curse me, that he who henceforth faileth not to praise thee, will have no dread of me in his heart."

Nala's wrath subsided, and he permitted Kali to enter the cloven fruit tree. Then he leapt into the chariot and drove on, and Kali returned unto his own place.

The chariot flew on like a bird, and the soul of Nala was elated with gladness. But he still retained the form of Vahuka.

At eventide the watchmen on the walls of Vidarbha

proclaimed the coming of Rituparna, and King Bhima gave permission that he should enter by the city gate.

All that region echoed the thunder of the rumbling chariot. Nala's horses, which Vārshneya had driven from Nishadha, and were within the city, careered and neighed aloud as if Nala were beside them once again.

Damayanti also heard the approaching chariot, and her beating heart was like a cloud which thunders as the rain cometh on. Her soul was thrilled by the familiar sound, and it seemed to her that Nala was drawing nigh.¹ . . . On the palace roofs peacocks craned their necks and danced,² and elephants in their stalls, with uplifted trunks, trumpeted aloud as if rain were about to fall.

Damayanti said: "The sound of the chariot fills my soul with ecstasy. Surely my lord cometh. Oh, if I see not soon the moon-fair face of Nala I will surely die, for, thinking of his virtues, my heart is rent with sorrow. Unless he cometh now I will no longer live, but will perish by fire."

¹ This recalls: "He came even unto them. . . . The driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously."—2 Kings, ix, 20.

² The Indian peacock is sensitive to rain, and goes round "dancing" when it is coming on.

CHAPTER XXIII

The Homecoming of the King

*Damayanti's Suspicions—Maid Interviews the Charioteer—The Message
 of the Husband's Emotion—Wonders Performed by Nala—Wife's
 Joy—Children Visit their Father—Interview in the Palace—Nala Re-
 joins his Damayanti—Her Confession and Vindication—Message from the
 King—Husband and Wife Reunited—Nala Returns to Nishadha—The
 Great Gambling Match—Nala Wins back his Kingdom—Erring Brother
 Forgives—King and Queen Once More.*

With sorrowful anxiety Damayanti ascended to the roof terrace of the lofty palace to gaze upon the chariot as it entered the middle court. She saw Rituparna stepping down, and Varshneya, who followed him, while Vâhuka began to unyoke the foaming steeds.

King Bhima, who knew naught of his daughter's stratagem, received the royal Rajah of Ayodhya with much courtesy, and said: "I bid thee welcome, O king. . . . Why hast thou come hither?"

Now Rituparna wondered greatly that he beheld no kings or kings' sons, or even signs that a swayamvara was about to be held, but he kept his counsel and said: "I have come to salute thee, O Bhima."

The royal sire of Damayanti smiled thereat and said: "He hath not come so speedily through the forest for such a purpose. But we shall know better when he hath made this journey."

He was then conducted to his chamber for rest and

refreshment by a company of royal servants, and Vārshneya went with them.

Meanwhile Vahuka led his horses to the stables, and Damayanti descended to her chamber, thinking again and again that the sound of the coming chariot was like to the sound of Nala drawing nigh. So she called her fair handmaid, who was named Keśini, and said unto her: "Go forth and speak to the misshapen charioteer with short arms, for methinks he is Nala. . . . Ask thou him who he is, and be mindful of his answer."

The handmaiden went forth and spoke unto Vāhuka, saying: "Lo! the Princess Damayanti would fain know whence ye come and for what purpose."

Said Vahuka: "King Rituparna hath heard that the swayamvara is to be held at dawn to-morrow, so he set forth from Ayodhya and came hither swifter than the wind. I am his charioteer."

Keśini asked him: "Who is the third man who hath come?"

Said Vāhuka: "Vārshneya is his name. He departed unto Ayodhya when Nala fled away. . . . I am skilled in taming steeds and in preparing viands."

The handmaiden then asked: "And doth this Vārshneya know whither Nala hath fled and how he fares. Hath he told thee aught regarding him?"

Said Vahuka: "Vārshneya carried away the children of Nala from Nishadha, but he knows not aught of the rajah, O fair one. Indeed, no man knoweth. He hath assumed a strange form, and wanders disguised about the world. . . . Nala alone knoweth, nor will he reveal himself."

Keśini then spake, saying: "When the holy Brahman went unto the city of Ayodhya he uttered those words of Damayanti once and once again:

'Whither art thou gone, O gambler, who didst sever my garment in twain? Thou didst leave thy loved one as she lay slumbering in the savage wood. Lo! she is awaiting thy return. By day and by night she sitteth alone, consumed by her grief. Oh! hear her prayer and have compassion, thou noble hero, because that she ever weepeth for thee in the depths of her despair.'

Now speak again, I pray thee, the words which thou didst utter to the Brahman, for they gave healing to the stricken heart of Damayanti. Fain would the princess hear that speech once more."

Then was the soul of Nala rent with grief, hearing the message of Damayanti, and with tearful voice he said, repeating his former utterance:

"In the excess of her sorrow a noble woman will compose herself and remain constant, and so win heaven by her virtues. She is protected by the breastplate of her chastity, and will suffer no harm. Nor will she yield to anger, although she be deserted by her lord, whose robe the birds have taken away, leaving him in sore distress. She will not be moved to wrath against her husband, the sorrow-stricken and famine-wasted, who hath been bereft of his kingdom and despoiled of happiness."

Nala could scarce restrain his emotion as he spoke these words. Then the fair Kesiñi hastened unto Damayanti and told all.

In her distress the princess said unto her handmaiden: "Go thou and observe this man closely, and return betimes to inform me of all he doeth. When he doth prepare viands for his royal master let no fire be given unto him nor any water."

Kesiñi hastened forth to watch the charioteer, and

when she returned she said: "O princess, this man is like unto a god. When he approacheth a low-built entrance he doth not stoop; the portal rises before him. Much flesh was given unto him to prepare viands for Rituparna. He but gazed on the empty vessels and they were filled with water. No fire was lit, and he took a handful of withered grass and held it up to the sun, whereupon it blazed instantly, and oh! the marvel, his fingers were unscorched by the flames. Water flows at his will, and as quickly it vanisheth. And lo! I beheld another marvel. When he lifted up flowers that had faded they were immediately refreshed, so that they had greater beauty and richer fragrance than before."¹

Damayanti was fully assured that Váhuka was no other than her husband in altered form, and, weeping, she said softly: "Ah! go once again to the kitchen, fair Keśinī, and obtain without his knowledge a small portion of the food which he hath prepared."

Ere long the handmaiden returned with a morsel of well-cooked meat, and when Damayanti, who had oft-times tried the food which had been cooked by her husband, tasted thereof, she uttered a loud cry in her anguish, and said: "Yon charioteer is Nala!"

Then she sipped water of ablution,² and sent her two children with Keśinī to the kitchen. Immediately that the charioteer beheld Indrasena and her brother he embraced them tenderly: he gazed lovingly upon the children, who were as beautiful as the children of the gods, and his soul was deeply moved, while tears ran down his cheeks. Seeing that the handmaiden observed him closely, he said: "Ah! the little ones are so like unto

¹ The powers given Nala by the gods as marriage gifts are here illustrated.

² A part of the ceremony of purification. The mouth was washed after eating, drinking, expectorating, slumbering, &c.

mine own children that I could not restrain my tears. . . . Let us part now, O innocent maiden; we are in a land of strangers, and if thou comest so often men will speak ill of thee."

When Damayanti was told how the charioteer had been so profoundly moved when he saw the royal children, she sent Ketini unto her mother, the queen, for she was impatient to behold her husband once again. The handmaiden spake to the queen, saying: "Lo! we have observed the charioteer closely, and believe that he is Nala, although misshapen of form. Damayanti is fain he would come before her, with or without the knowledge of her sire, and that quickly."

The queen at once went unto Bhima and told him all, and the rajah gave permission that the charioteer should be summoned. In an instant word was sent unto Nala, and soon he stood before Damayanti and gazed upon her, and was moved to anguish. The princess was clad in a robe of scarlet, and her hair was thrown into disarray and defiled with dust: she wept and trembled with emotion.

At length Damayanti spoke, saying: "O Vāhuka, hast thou ever heard of a noble and upright man who fled away, abandoning his sleeping wife in a forest? Innocent was she, and worn out with grief. Who was he who thus forsook his wife but the lordly Nala? . . . What offence did I give unto him that he should have deserted me while I slept? Was he not chosen by me as mine husband even before the gods? . . . How could he abandon her who loved him—the mother of his children? . . . Before the celestial beings he pledged his faith. How hath he kept his vow?"

She spoke with broken voice, and her dark eyes were dewed by sorrow.

Nala made answer, gazing upon his beloved wife, and said: "My kingdom I lost by the dice, but I was innocent of evil, because Kali possessed my soul, and by that demon was I also swayed to desert thee, O timid one! But thou didst smite him with thy curse when thou wert in the forest mourning for me, yet he remained in my body until, in the end, he was conquered by my long-suffering and devotion. Lo! now, O beauteous one, our grief is nigh to its end. The evil one hath departed, and through love of thee I come hither right speedily. . . . But how," he asked sternly, "may a high-born lady choose her another husband, as thou wouldst fain do, even now, O faint heart? The heralds have gone up and down the land saying: '*The daughter of Bhima will hold her second swayamvara because such is her fancy.*' And for this reason Rituparna made haste to come hither."¹

Damayanti shook with emotion when these hard words were spoken, and she addressed Nala, saying: "Do not suspect me, O noble one, of such shameful guilt. It was for thee and thee alone that the Bráhmans went forth repeating the message which I addressed unto them. Lo! when I learned of the words thou didst speak unto the wise Parnada, I conceived this stratagem with purpose to bring thee hither. Faithful of heart have I remained, nor ever have I thought evil of thee. I call upon the wind to slay me now if I have sinned: on the sun I call also and on the moon, which enters into every thought of living beings. Let these three gods who govern the three worlds² speak now to prove my words, or else turn against me."

¹ According to the laws of Manu, second marriages were unlawful. Apparently, however, they were permissible at the early period of the poem, at least in some districts.

² Heaven, the earth, and the underworld.

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were watered and strewn with flowers. The altars of the gods were also adorned.

When Rituparna came to know that his charioteer, Váhuka, was the Rajah of Nishadha, he was well pleased, and he went into Nala's presence and said: "May thou have joy with thy queen to whom thou art re-united. Have I ever done aught unjustly unto thee whilst thou wert in my palace? If so, I now seek thy forgiveness."

Said Nala, "No injustice have I ever suffered from thee, mine old friend and kinsman. . . . I give thee fully all I have—my skill in steeds."

Rituparna was grateful unto Nala for his gift. He gave in return fuller instruction in the science of dice, and thereafter departed to his own city.

When a month had gone past Nala took leave of King Bhima and went towards Nishadha with one great chariot, sixteen elephants, fifty armed horsemen, and six hundred foot soldiers. The whole force entered the city boldly and made the earth to shake. Nala at once went before Pushkara and said: "I would fain throw dice with thee once again. I have much wealth and will stake all my treasure and even Damayanti upon the hazard. Thou, Pushkara, must stake thy kingdom. Let us stake everything; let us play for our lives. And know, too, that, according to ancient law, he who wins a kingdom by gambling must accept the challenge to play the counter game. . . . If thou wilt not play, then let us settle our difference in single combat."

Pushkara restrained from smiling, for he was confident of success, so with haughty contempt he made answer:

"It is joy to me that thou dost again possess great treasure to enable thee to play. It is joy also to me that I can win Damayanti with faultless limbs. Soon,

Then the wind which the princess had assured came from without and said: "O Nala, Damayanti hath done no evil, nor hath she thought on evil. For three long years she hath treasured up her virtue in its fullness. She speaketh what is true even now. Thou hast found the daughter of Bhima: the daughter of Bhima hath found thee. Take now thine own wife to thy bosom."

Even as the wind was speaking, flowers fell out of heaven all around them,¹ and the soft music of the gods floated down the wind. Nala marvelled greatly, and gazed with love upon the innocent Damayanti. Then he put on the holy garment and thought upon the king of serpents. Immediately he resumed his own form, and the daughter of Bhima beheld her lost husband once again.

Damayanti shrieked and embraced Nala, and she hid her face in his bosom. He was again travel-worn and dust-stained as he clasped her to his heart, and she sighed softly. Long they stood there, speaking no words, in silent ecstasy. . . . The children were brought in and Nala embraced them once more.

Then did the queen, who rejoiced greatly, inform Bhima of Nala's return, and he said: "When he has performed his ablutions he will be re-united to Damayanti on the morrow."

The whole night long the happy pair sat together in the palace relating all that had befallen them during the years that they were parted one from another.

On the morn that followed Nala was again wedded to Damayanti, and thereafter he paid homage to Bhima. The glad tidings of his return spread swiftly through the city, and there was great rejoicing. Soon all the houses were decorated with banners and garlands; the streets

¹ A sign of divine approval and favour.

were watered and strewn with flowers. The altars of the gods were also adorned.

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indeed, will Bhima's daughter be decorated with the treasure which I shall win; she shall stand by my side as Apsarās, queen of heaven, stands beside Indra. Long have I waited for thee so that I might win Damayantī and be fully satisfied."

Nala would fain have drawn his sword, but composed himself, and, with angry eyes and scornful smile, he said: "Cease this idle chatter and let us play. Thereafter thou wilt have no desire to speak."

Immediately the two brothers set to the game, and Nala won at a single hazard all that he had lost. Then he smiled and said: "Now the whole kingdom is mine once again. Fallen monarch! never wilt thou behold the fair Damayantī because thou art become her slave. . . . Know now, that thou didst not triumph heretofore by reason of thine own skill, but because Kali aided thee, nor didst thou perceive this, O fool! . . . But fear not that I will take vengeance. . . . I give thee back thy life. Thou wilt have an estate and revenues and my friendship, because I remember, O Pushkara, that thou art my brother. . . . Mayst thou live for a hundred years!"

Then Nala embraced his brother, who did homage with hands folded, saying: "May thy splendour endure for ever! May thou live for ten thousand years! Thou hast given me my life and a city in which to live."

Pushkara remained with Nala for a month, and then went his way to his own domain.

All Nishadha rejoiced because that their rightful king had returned. The counsellors of state did homage before Nala, and said: "There is great joy now in city and country, and the people come to honour thee even as Indra is honoured by all the gods."

When the rejoicings were over, and the city of Nis-

hadha was again tranquil, Damayanti returned home escorted by a great army, and she brought great treasures which her royal sire Bhima, the terrible in strength, had conferred upon her. With the long-eyed queen came her children also.

Thereafter Nala lived in happiness like unto the mighty Indra, being happily restored to his kingdom, and once again the monarch among men. He achieved great renown as a ruler, and he performed every holy rite with munificence and devotion.



Kusa grass, sipped holy water, and became absorbed in thought, until visions of the story were revealed before his eyes. Sloka by sloka and book by book, he composed the *Ramayana*; and as long as mountains endure and rivers run towards the sea, so long will it be repeated by the lips of mankind.

Valmiki sang that in days of yore there were two mighty kingdoms in sun-bright Hindustan, and these were Ko'sala, whose King was Dasarath'a, father of Rama, and Mit'hila,¹ which was ruled over by Jan'aka, the father of beauteous Sita.

Now the capital of Kosala was Ayodhya², which shone in splendour like to Indra's celestial city; it had wide streets with large dwellings, richly decorated temples, towering like mountains, and grand and noble palaces. In the palace gardens there were numerous birds and flowers, shady groves of fruit trees, and lakes gemmed with bee-loved lotuses; the soft winds were wont to beat back the white water-blooms from the honey bees as coy maidens are withheld by the impulses of modesty from their eager lovers. Birds disported on the gleaming lakes, kingfishers were angered to behold themselves mirrored in the depths, thinking they gazed upon rivals, and ruffled the waters with their flapping wings. . . . The city of Ayodhya was full of prosperous and happy people.

Maharajah Dasaratha, who was of the Solar Race, dwelt in a stately palace; it was surrounded by strong walls, and guarded by a thousand warriors fierce as flames of consuming fire, and ever watchful like to mountain lions which protect their dens. Eight sage counsellors served the monarch with devotion, and he had two family priests, Vasishtha and Vamadeva.

¹ The kingdoms of Oudh and North Behar.

² *Prav. a-yōd'hya.*

But although Dasaratha was mighty and powerful, and prospered greatly, his heart was full of sorrow because that no son had been born to him by either of his three queens, Kausalya, Kaikeyi, and Sumitra. . . . At length he resolved to perform the Aswamedha (horse sacrifice) so that the gods might be prevailed upon to grant him an heir who would perpetuate his race. When his will was made known to the queens, their faces brightened as the lotus brightens at the promise of spring.

So it came to pass that a black horse was let loose on the night of the full moon of the month of Choitro¹. A Brahman accompanied it, and after wandering for a full year, the animal returned again to the kingdom.²

Many rajahs attended the ceremony which took place on the north bank of the Sarayu river. Twenty-one sacrificial posts were set up for the birds, and beasts, and reptiles, which were to be offered up besides the horse, and there were eighteen Homa pits. When the fire was kindled upon the altar, Kausalya, the chief queen, slew the horse with the sacred scimitar, while the Brahmans chanted mantras. . . . All night long Kausalya and Kaikeyi, wives of the Maharajah, sat beside the horse's body, as was needful in performance of the rite. . . . Portions of the flesh were duly given to the fire, and when the ceremony was completed, Dasaratha awarded great gifts of kine and treasure to the Brahmans.

An oblation was afterwards offered to the gods, who came to the place of sacrifice with the music-loving Gandharvas, the Celestial saints, the Siddhas³, and seven Deva-rishis. Brahma came with Vishnu and Shiva, and

¹ Easter full moon.

² As we have seen, Arjuna and an army accompanied the white horse which was released in the *Asvamedha*.

³ The spirits of ancestors.

Indra came also with the hastening Maruts. Ere they departed, the gods promised that four sons would be born to Dasaratha.

After this, Indra and the other gods¹ journeyed to the heaven of Brahma, and spake regarding Ravana², the monarch of demons, who had his dwelling in Lankā.³

Now Ravana had performed such great penances that Brahma rendered him invulnerable to gods and demons, with the result that the demon made Yama, god of death, his slave, and put Agni and Vayu, and the sun and moon, under subjection; indeed, he oppressed all the gods and obstructed sacrifices and despoiled the Brahmans. So Indra and other minor deities entreated Brahma to deliver them from the sway of Ravana.

Brahma heard the gods, and then conducted them to Vishnu's dwelling in the Ocean of Milk. Indra and the others honoured the Preserver, and cried: "O Lord of the Universe, remove the afflictions which press heavily upon us. Brahma hath blessed Ravana, nor can recall his gift. Save us, therefore, from the oppression of the demon king."

Vishnu spake and said: "Be not afraid, for I shall deliver you all. Ravana entreated Brahma for protection against all beings save the apes and men. Go therefore towards the earth, ye gods, and assume the guise of apes, and lo! I will divide myself into four parts and be born as the four sons of Maharajah⁴ Dasaratha. When I shall battle against Ravana, you will hasten to mine aid."

It came to pass that the wives of Dasaratha, who had eaten of sacrificial food, became the mothers of sons—

¹ The Vedic deities.

² From *rah'-va-na*.

³ He is called a Rakshasa king in the *Ramayana*. Ravana appears to be the Brahmanical conception of Vritra, the ruler of the Danavas or Asuras. Lankā is Ceylon.

Kausalya of Rama, Kaikeyi of Bharata, and Sumitra of Laksh'mana, and Satrugna. The people of the kingdom rejoiced greatly; they danced and sang and decked Ayodhya with streamers and flower garlands.

Of the four children Rama was the most beautiful: lying in his white cradle he was like to a blue lotus bloom amidst the gleaming waves of the Ganges. Vasishta, the wise Brahman, perceived that he had all the marks of Vishnu, and revealed his knowledge to the Maharajah, by whom the child was well beloved. One evening the full moon rose in all its splendour, and Rama stretched out his hands because he desired to have it for a toy. His mother bought him jewels, but he threw them from him and wailed and wept until his eyes were red and swollen. Many of the women assembled round the cradle in deep concern. One said that the child was hungry, but he refused to drink; another that the Sasti was unpropitious, and offerings were at once made to that goddess; still Rama wept. A third woman declared that a ghost haunted and terrified the child, and mantras were chanted.

When the women found that they were unable to soothe Kausalya's son, the Maharajah was called, but Rama heeded him not. In his despair Dasaratha sent for his chief counsellor, who placed in Rama's hands a mirror which reflected the moon. Then the little prince was comforted, believing that he had obtained the moon; he ceased to weep, and everyone was put at ease once again.

When the children grew older they began to lisp words, and as they were unable to pronounce "peeta" and "mata"¹ they said "pa" and "ma". If Rama were asked his name, he answered "Ama". Sometimes

¹ Father and mother.

the Maharajah sat among his sage counsellors with the little boy upon his knee.

In their third year the princes had their ears pierced, and after that they played with other children. They made clay images of gods and put clay offerings in their mouths, and they broke the images because they would not eat.

Their education began when they were five years old. Vasishtha was the preceptor, and first he worshipped Saraswati, goddess of learning, and instructed his pupils to make offerings of flowers and fruit. They received instruction daily, beginning with the alphabet; then they studied grammar, and at length they mastered eighteen languages; they were also instructed in music and dancing and painting, and in all the sciences. From time to time the princes were examined by their royal sire in the presence of his counsellors. Afterwards they were trained to exercise in arms and take part in military sports, and they became skilled archers, and elephant riders, and horsemen and charioteers. Of all the princes Rama was the most accomplished; he rose above the others like to a flag which flutters proudly above a high dome.

Now when the princes were sixteen years old, their royal sire began to consider what brides should be selected for them. It chanced that while he was discussing this matter one day with his counsellors, Vishwamitra paid a visit to the palace. Dasaratha welcomed him with due honours, and spake saying: "Speak and tell what is thy request so that I may grant it speedily."

That mighty sage, who had been a Kshatriya in former times, but became a Brahman after practising rigid and long austerities, made answer and said: "O Maharajah, the Rakshasas are destroying our sacrificial

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When the women found that they could not soothe Kausalya's son, the Maharajah Rama heeded him not. In his distress he called for his chief counsellor, who presented him a mirror which reflected the mother. Rama was comforted, believing that he was his mother. He ceased to weep, and ever after he was again.

When the children grew up, they spoke words, and as they were called "mama" and "mama" they said "mama" were as

tras, which caused Celestial weapons to appear for Rama, and the spirits of the weapons stood before the prince with clasped hands and said: "*We are thy servants, O nobly generous one. Good betide thee! Whatever thou dost desire, lo! we shall accomplish for thee.*"¹

Said Rama: "When I have need of you, I will think of you, and then you will wait upon me."

Thereafter Vishwamitra led the princes to his hermitage, which was situated in a pleasant grove where deer disported and birds sang sweetly. All the sages welcomed them. It chanced that when six days had gone past, the Brahmans prepared to offer up a sacrifice. Suddenly a band of Rakshasas, led by Maricha, son of the hag Taraka and Savahu, rushed towards the altar to defile the offering with bones and blood. Rama thought of his celestial weapons, and they immediately appeared beside

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¹ A *Carle* is a *spirit*, * Every weapon has its demon*.

offerings, and I pray you to permit Rama to return with me to my hermitage, for he is mighty and brave and young and is able to overpower the demons."

Reluctantly did Dasaratha consent, but not until Vaishntha had reassured him, and he commanded the Lakshmana should accompany Rama to the hermitage. Then the princes took leave of their parents and went away with Vishwamitra.

On the first night they abode in a hermitage situated where the river Sarayu pours into the Ganges, and the sage informed the princes that on that very spot Shiva had been wounded by the arrows of Kamadeva, god of love, whom he angrily consumed with the fire that issued from his third eye.

Next day the sage led the two princes towards a dark and fearsome jungle haunted by numerous beasts of prey, in which dwell the terrible Rakshasa woman named Taraka, mother of Maricha;¹ she was misshapen and horrible, and continually ravaged all that country. Rama twanged his bow to challenge her, and she came towards the princes roaring angrily and throwing boulders. Because she was a female, the sons of Dasaratha were reluctant to cause her death. Rama shot arrows and cut off both her arms, and Lakshmana deprived her of nose and ears. She immediately changed her shape and became invisible, but by the power of sorcery continued to cause many stones to fall in showers about the young heroes. Vishwamitra urged Rama to slay her, and, guided by sound alone, he shot a great arrow which caused her death. Then the sage rejoiced greatly, and embracing Rama kissed his head.

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¹ The fighting Rakshasas of the *Mahabharata* are all males. Here the female—the mother of demons—is prominent, as in *Beowulf* and typical Scottish stories.

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Now, both while they abode at the hermitage and as they journeyed towards Mithila, the princes heard the sacred legends of Vishnu in his dwarf incarnation, of the Churning of the Ocean, of the descent of Ganga through Shiva's hair, and of the cursing of Indra by a sage.

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It chanced that Kaikeyi was gazing idly from the palace roof on the illuminated and bustling streets, when the hunchbacked slave approached her, and said: "Canst thou be merry, O foolish one, on this night? Thou art threatened by dire misfortune. Dasaratha hath deceived thee. Thy son Bharata hath been sent to thy father's city, so that the son of Kausalya may be installed as Yuvarajah on the morrow. Henceforth thou wilt be the bondswoman of Kausalya, Rama's mother, and thou wilt have to wait obediently on the commands of proud Sita. Hasten now and prevent this dread happening."

Said Kaikeyi: "Why do you hate Rama? He is the eldest son of the chief queen, and Bharata could not become Yuvarajah without the consent of Kausalya's son, who honours me as he honours his own mother."

Manthara fumed with wonder and indignation at these words; then she said: "What madness hath blinded thee? What folly maketh thee heedless of the gulf of sorrow which awaiteth thee and thy son? I am older than thou art, and have seen dark deeds committed in royal houses. Can Bharata become the slave of Rama? Well I know that jealous Rama will drive thy lordly son into exile and mayhap slay him. . . . Arise, thou heedless queen, and save Bharata, lest he be sent to wander alone in the fearsome jungle. Speak thy mandate to the

¹ Pron. ky-ky-yee'.

At length they reached the capital of Janaka,¹ King of Mithila, who welcomed Vishwamitra, and said: "Who are these courageous young men with the majesty of elephants and the fearlessness of tigers? Comely are they as the twin Aswins."

Said the sage: "These are sons of Dasaratha; they are slayers of Rakshasas, and desire greatly to behold Shiva's mighty bow."

Then the monarch spake to the nobles and warriors, and said: "Bring forth the bow."

His command was immediately obeyed. From an inner hall many stalwart men hauled the stupendous bow on an eight-wheeled iron chariot into the presence of the monarch of Mithila.

"Behold the bow of Shival" cried the warriors.

Said Janaka: "Behold the mighty bow which has been treasured by generations of kings. Many rajahs and warriors have endeavoured in vain to bend it; even Rakshasas and Asuras have failed; the gods themselves quail before it. . . . To the rajah who can bend this mighty weapon I will give in marriage my daughter, the beauteous Sita."

Rama gazed with wonder, and then said: "Permit me to lift and bend thy bow."

Wondering greatly at these words, the monarch and many high nobles and strong warriors gathered round about. . . . With smiling face, Rama lifted the bow; then proudly he strung it, whereat those who looked on were all amazed. . . . The prince put forth his strength and bent the bow with resistless force until it snapped in the middle with a terrible noise like to thunder; the

¹ "The remains of the capital founded by Janaka, and still to be seen, according to Buchanan, on the maps."—Note to Professor H. H. Wilson.

shook and the mountains echoed aloud. . . . At the loud crash, which resembled the roar of Indra's thunderbolt, all who were present fell down stunned and terrified save Janaka and Vishwamitra and the two sons of Dasaratha.

Said the monarch: "Now have mine eyes beheld a great wonder. Peerless is Rama, the noble one, and he shall be given for wife my daughter Sita, who is dearer to me than life. . . . Let speedy messengers hasten unto Dasaratha and bid him to come hither."

When Dasaratha reached Janaka's capital, Rama and Sita were wedded amidst great rejoicings.

Happy were the lovers together. When they arrived at Ayodhya the people welcomed them, and Dasaratha's queens embraced and kissed the soft-eyed bride of peerless fame.

It is told that on their honeymoon they loved to wander in the moonlight. On a night of warmth and beauty they went to the banks of a pond which sparkled with lotus blooms.

Said Rama: "My loved one, graceful art thou as the lotus, thy hair is like silken moss, thine eyes like beautiful bees; fair is thy face as the moon's soft image amidst the waters, thine arms are shapely lotus stalks, and thy bosom is like to buds of sweet lotus, O my peerless bride."

They plunged together into the cool, moon-swept waters, and Rama cast at his bride many fair water blooms. Sita retreated before him until she went beyond her depth; then she clung lovingly to Rama, twining her arms about his neck, nor did he hasten to draw her back, so dearly he loved to be embraced by her.

Hide-and-seek they then played amidst the floating flowers. Rama sank down until his face only was seen,

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¹ "The remains of the capital founded by Janaka, and thence termed Janakpur, are still to be seen, according to Buchanan, on the northern frontier at the junction of the Ganges."—Note to Professor H. H. Wilson's translation of the *Uttara Rama Charita*.

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and Sita, who searched for him, knew not whether she saw the face of Rama or a blue lotus bloom on the surface of the pond. Bending down to smell what seemed to be a flower, she touched her lover's lips, and he kissed her sweetly. Then Sita hid herself, and her face was like to a lotus bloom among lotus blooms. Rama kissed her many times ere she moved or smiled. . . . At length they darted merrily from the pond in bright moonlight, their garments dripping sparkling water drops, and then they drank cups of honey; the heart of Sita was intoxicated, and she babbled words of love and sweetness. . . .

Rama and Sita spent happy hours together, sharing supreme joy like to Vishnu and peerless Lakshmi in the bright Celestial regions.

The Maharajah Dasaratha was growing old, and his counsellors and the people began to consider who should be appointed Yuvarajah (Young Rajah), to take over the duties of sovereignty and allow the monarch to spend his closing years in preparation for death, so that he might secure heaven in the next life.

All the sages and chieftains favoured the choice of Rama, and the heart of Dasaratha was filled with joy. The people rejoiced also when it was told to them that Rama was to become their ruler, and they raised shouts of triumph and gladness. Then Rama was sent for, and the Maharajah blessed him and bade him to spend the night in Vishnu's temple with his wife Sita, to prepare for the ceremony of installation on the morrow. That night the city of Ayodhya was illuminated, and the people prepared to decorate the streets with garlands and streamers when the dawn came.

Now there was one who did not rejoice, because that she hated Rama, son of the queen Kausalya. This was the old nurse of Prince Bharata, son of the queen Kai-

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Manthara fumed with wonder and indignation at these words; then she said: "What madness hath blinded thee? What folly maketh thee heedless of the gulf of sorrow which awaiteth thee and thy son? I am older than thou art, and have seen dark deeds committed in royal houses. Can Bharata become the slave of Rama? Well I know that jealous Rama will drive thy lordly son into exile and mayhap slay him. . . . Arise, thou heedless queen, and save Bharata, lest he be sent to wander alone in the fearsome jungle. Speak thy mandate to the

¹ Pron. ky-kay-yed'.

Maharajah, whose heart hath been captivated by thy beauty. . . . Any other woman but thee would rather die than suffer a rival wife to triumph over her."

Said Kaikeyi, whose heart began to burn with jealousy and anger: "How can I prevail upon Dasaratha to exalt my son and send Rama into exile?"

Then the hunchback reminded Bharata's mother that she had been promised two boons by her husband. In some time past Dasaratha had gone to help Indra to wage war against the demons. He was grievously wounded and would have died, but Kaikeyi cured him. So he vowed to grant her two boons, and she said: "When I have need of two favours, I will remind thee of thy promise."

Manthara spake to the queen mother of Bharata, saying: "Now go to the mourning chamber and feign sorrow and anger. The Maharajah will seek thee out, and when he findeth thee demand of him the two boons which he promised aforetime."

So it came to pass that in the mourning chamber Kaikeyi spake to Dasaratha, and said: "Now grant me the two boons as thou didst vow to do, or I shall die this night."

Said the Maharajah: "Speak thy wishes, and they will be granted. May I never achieve bliss if thy desires are not fulfilled."

Kaikeyi said: "Let royal deeds redeem royal words. The first boon I ask is that my son Bharata be installed as Yuvarajah; the second is that Rama be banished for fourteen years to live in the jungle as a devotee clad in a robe of bark."

When Dasaratha heard these awful words he swooned and fell prone like to a tempest-smitten tree. . . . At length he recovered his senses, and opening his eyes,

said: "Have I dreamed a fearsome dream? Do demons torture me? Is my mind clouded with madness?" . . .

Hushed and trembling, he gazed upon Kaikeyi as a startled deer gazes at a tigress. . . . He was as helpless as a serpent which hath been mantra-charmed, and for a time he sobbed aloud. . . . At length wrath possessed him, and, red-eyed and loud-voiced, he reproached her, saying: "Trairess, wouldst thou bring ruin to my family? . . . Rama hath never wronged thee; why dost thou seek to injure him? O Kaikeyi, whom I have loved and taken to my bosom, thou hast crept into my house like a poisonous snake to accomplish my ruin. It is death to me to part with my brave and noble Rama, now that I am old and feeble. . . . Have pity on me and ask for other boons."

Said Kaikeyi, coldly and bitterly: "If thou wilt break thy vow now to one who saved thy life, all men will despise thee, and I will drink poison this very night."

Dasaratha was made silent a time. Then he spoke with tears, and said: "Beautiful art thou, O Kaikeyi. Thou hast taken captive my heart. How can this evil desire dwell in thy bosom and darken it with guile? Thou hast entrapped me with the bait of thy beauty. . . . Can a father dishonour his well-loved son? Rather would I enter hell than send Rama into exile. How can I look upon his face again? How can I suffer to behold him parting with gentle Sita? . . . Oh! I have drunk of sweet wine mingled with poison. . . . Have pity on me, O Kaikeyi! I fall at thy feet. . . . I would that Yama would snatch me off in this hour."

Said Kaikeyi: "If thou dost honour truth thou wilt grant the boons I crave, but if thou wouldst rather break thine oath, let me drink poison now."

Dasaratha cried in his grief: "O shadow-robed

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mounted and walked across the two inner courts; he then bade his followers to remain without, and soon he stood before the Maharajah and made humble obeisance.

Rama beheld his father sitting beside Kaikeyi; his body was bent, his face was worn with grief. Tears fell from Dasaratha's eyes as his son kissed his feet and the feet of Kaikeyi also; he strove to speak while tears streamed from his eyes, but all he could utter was, "Oh! Rama." . . . The sorrow of Dasaratha rose and fell in his heart like to the waves of a stormy sea.

Said Rama: "Oh! have I offended my sire? Speak, mother, and tell. Wherefore do tears fall from his eyes? Why is his face clouded with grief? . . . I would rather die than wound his heart by word or deed."

Kaikeyi said: "The Maharajah is not angered, nor is he grief-stricken, but he fears to speak his purpose until thou dost promise to serve his will."

Said Rama: "O speak and I will obey even if I am asked to quaff poison and die ere my time. My promise is given and my lips have never lied."

Kaikeyi said coldly: "The Maharajah vowed to grant two boons when I cured his wounds and saved his life, although he repents his promise now like to a man of low caste. I have asked him to fulfil his vow, and the boons I crave are that Bharata, whose star is bright, be installed as Yuvarajah, and thou shouldst be banished for twice seven years. . . . If thou art ready to obey thy father's will and preserve his honour, thou wilt depart this day from the city and permit Bharata to govern the kingdom."

Dasaratha's heart was pierced with agony at these words, but Rama heard them unmoved; they fell upon his ears like to sparks falling into the sea. Calmly he spake and said: "I will depart this day in fulfilment of my father's vow. Cheerfully will I obey his command. Let Bharata

Night, decked with stars! arrest the hours that pass by, or else give my heart release. Cover with thy darksome mantle my sorrow and my shame, and hide this deed of crime from the knowledge of mankind. Let me perish ere the dawn; may the sun never rise to shine upon my sin-smeared life."

So he lamented through the night, and unto Kaikeyi he said: "I grant the boons, but I reject thee for ever and thy son Bharata also."

Morning dawned. . . . The city was decorated with streamers and flowers. A golden throne was set up for Rama; the tiger's skin was spread for his feet; the white umbrella waited for him. Elephants and chariot horses were harnessed. . . . The preparations for the sacrifice were completed. . . . The crowds began to gather in the streets waiting for the Maharajah and noble Rama, whom all the people loved.

Towards the palace went Sumantra, the chief counsellor. He entered the chamber in which Dasaratha had spent the night to awaken him and conduct him to the ceremony.

Kaikeyi met the counsellor and said: "Summon Rama hither, for the Maharajah must speak with him."

Wondering greatly, Sumantra hastened to the prince's dwelling and spake the royal command. Said Rama: "I will go quickly. Tarry here, O Sita, and await my return."

Sita followed Rama to the doorway and invoked the gods so that they might bless and protect him.

The multitudes of people hailed the prince as he was driven in his chariot towards the palace, and women threw flowers upon him from the housetops. . . . He entered the gate, driving through the first three courts; he d-

mana, I have promised my sire to obey. Do not ask me to break my plighted word."

Still Kausalya pleaded with Rama to remain, and he sought to comfort her, but her grief was too heavy to be removed, for she loved her son dearly and hated her rival Kaikeyi.

With darkened brow and saddened eyes, Rama then went unto Sita and told her all, and said: "My mother is heartbroken, O Sita; she hath need of thee to soothe her grief. O dearly beloved, I must now depart and leave thee. Be ever obedient unto Bharata, nor laud me ever, for a rajah cares not to hear another praised in his presence."

Said Sita: "A wife must ever accompany her husband and share his sufferings. If thou must depart to the forest, it is my duty to go before thee and smooth the thorns in thy path. So long as I am with thee I will be happy even in the jungle. Dearer to me than the palace is the place where I can hold sweet converse with my husband. I will lighten thy burden of sorrow, O Rama, but if thou wilt leave me here alone I will surely die."

Rama spoke of the perils of the jungle, which was full of wild beasts and venomous reptiles, where food was scarce, and, when found, bitter to taste, where they would find no home and would have to lie on the bare ground, and where they would suffer greatly from heat and cold, from tempest and rains. "O Sita," he cried, "thou art dearer to me than life itself. How can I permit thee to suffer for me? My love will grow greater when I know what it is to be separated from thee. . . . Wait here, O loved one, until I return again."

Said Sita: "I know nor fear the perils and sorrows of the jungle. Rather would I sleep with thee on the bare ground than lie here alone on a bed of down. Without

be summoned quickly from Girivrajah, and I will hasten to the jungle of Dandaka."

Said Kaikeyi: "So be it. . . . But tarry not, for thy sire will neither wash nor eat until thou hast departed hence."

Rama bowed before his sire who was prostrated with sorrow; he bowed before Kaikeyi also. . . . All the royal attendants wept, but Rama was unmoved as is the ocean when a pot of water is drawn from it or poured in.

He went towards Kausalya, his mother, who was engaged making offerings to Vishnu on his behalf, and informed her what had taken place.

Kausalya wept and cried: "O dearly beloved, if thou hadst never been born I would not have to suffer this calamity. . . . My son, I am the chief queen, but Kaikeyi hath supplanted me, and I am disliked and neglected by my husband. . . . I am old and unable to endure the loss of thee, my son. . . . Hath my heart grown hard as rock that it will not break now? Is Yama's mansions so full that I am not called away? I have no desire to live any longer. . . . Can a son obey a sire in his dotage? . . . Rama, Rama, the people will rise in revolt; seize thou the throne, and if thy father remaineth hostile slay him, because he hath become contemptible before all men, being but a woman's slave."

Lakshmana said: "Mother, thy words are just. Who will dare oppose Rama so long as I serve him?"

Said Kausalya: "Hear the words of thy brother, Rama. If thy sire's command must be obeyed so must mine, and I command thee now not to depart to the jungle. If thou wilt not obey me, I will eat no more food and thou wilt be guilty of my death."

Rama said: "I must obey my sire's command. Permit me, therefore, O mother, to depart now. . . . O Laksh-

followers, and asked for the raiment of bark which he must wear, and for the spade with which to dig roots and the basket to carry them.

The shameless Kaikeyi then went away and returned with three dresses of bark. Rama and Lakshmana immediately cast off their royal garments and all their ornaments, and assumed the rough attire of devotees. But Sita, who from childhood had been clad in silk, wept and said: "How can I wear raiment of bark? I cannot use such attire."

All the women shed tears at these words, and Dasaratha said: "Kaikeyi's command is binding on Rama only, and his wife and brother may assume any garments they desire."

So the robe of bark was taken away from Sita; it was not permitted that she should be put to shame.

Then Rama and Sita and Lakshmana took leave of all those who were in the palace, and, amidst lamentation and wailing, took their departure from the palace. They were conveyed to the frontier of the kingdom in a chariot, and many people followed them from the city, resolved to share exile with Rama. The night was spent on the banks of the Tamasa, and all slept save Rama alone. As soon as dawn came, he awakened Sita and Lakshmana and the charioteer, and together they departed ere the slumbering multitude were aware. The exiles thereafter parted with the charioteer, and crossing the river Tamasa, journeyed on till they saw the sacred Ganges, in which the gods are wont to bathe, and on whose banks many sages had chosen hermitages.

When the people awoke and found that those whom they loved and honoured had hastened away, they returned with hearts full of sorrow to the mourning city of Ayodhya.

thee I have no desire to live. . . . Take me with thee, O Rama, and let me share thy sorrow and thy joys. Sweeter will be the jungle with thee beside me than the palace when thou hast departed."

In vain Rama remonstrated with her, but she refused to be separated from him. She fell at his feet, weeping bitterly, and at length he consented that she should share his sufferings in the jungle.

Then Lakshmana pleaded to accompany Rama also, nor could he be persuaded to remain behind.

Thereafter Rama and Sita and Lakshmana went together, walking barefooted, towards the palace to bid farewell to the Maharajah and his queens.

Rumours of what had happened were passing through the city, and the people gazed with sorrow on Rama, his bride and his brother, and some said: "The Maharajah is possessed by demons." Others said: "Let us desert the city and follow Rama. Then Bharata will have none left to rule over."

Rama entered the palace with his wife and brother, and stood before the Maharajah with folded hands.

Dasaratha lamented and said: "A woman hath deceived me. She concealed her wicked designs in her heart as a fire is concealed by ashes. . . . The evening is late; tarry therefore with thy mother and me until day breaks."

Said Rama: "Kaikeyi commanded me to depart this day to the jungle, and I promised to obey. . . . When fourteen years have gone past we shall return again and honour thee."

The Maharajah and his counsellors desired to send the royal army and the huntsmen and much grain and treasure to the jungle with Rama, although Kaikeyi protested loudly, but Rama refused to have soldiers and

followers, and asked for the raiment of bark which he must wear, and for the spade with which to dig roots and the basket to carry them.

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parents of their son's death. The sire lamented aloud, and said: "Oh! lead me to my son. Let me embrace him for the last time."

Dasaratha conducted the weeping parents to the spot where the lad lay lifeless and stained with blood. The sire clasped the body, and cried: "Oh! wilt thou not speak and greet me, my son? Thou liest on the ground; thou dost not answer me when I call. Alas! thou canst not love me any longer. . . . Thy mother is here. Oh! thou who wert dutiful and kind, speak but one tender word to her and to me. . . . Who will now read to us each morning the holy books? Who will now find roots and fruits to feed us? . . . Oh! tarry with us yet a little longer, my son. Wait for us ere thou dost depart to the Kingdom of Death—stay but one day longer, and on the morrow thy father and mother will go with thee on the weary and darksome path of no returning. . . . How can we live now that our child and protector is taken from us?"

So the blind old hermit lamented. Then he spake to the king, and said: "I had but this one child and thou hast made me childless. Now slay me also, because Death is blunted and unable to hurt me any more. . . . A father cannot feel greater agony than when he sorrows for a beloved son. This peculiar sharp sorrow thou wilt yet know, O king. As I weep now, and as I am hastened to death, mourning for my son, so wilt thou suffer in like manner, sorrowing for a dearly-beloved and righteous son. Thy death, O Dasaratha, will cleanse thee of this crime."

Having spoken thus, the hermit built the funeral pyre for the dead boy, and when it was lit he and his wife leapt amidst the flames and entered the Kingdom of Death.

have embraced and kissed me on my return. But where is Rama, who is now as a sire unto me?"

Then Kaikeyi told him all that had taken place, and said: "For thy sake, my son, I have accomplished this. Sorrow not, because thou wilt be installed as ruler here."

Said Bharata: "I have lost my father and my elder brother. Of what good is a kingdom unto me now? O evil-hearted woman, thou hast bereft this house of all joy; thou hast slain my sire and banished Rama. . . . But I will bring my brother back from the jungle; he shall be seated on the throne."

Satrughna sorrowed like Bharata, and when he beheld the wicked hunchback Manthara he threw her down and dragged her across the floor, saying: "This hateful creature is the cause of our calamities. I will slay her."

Kaikeyi flew away in terror, and Bharata said: "Slay her not, because she is a woman. I would have killed my wicked mother, but, had I done so, Rama would ne'er have forgiven me nor have spoken to me again. Spare this wretch, O Satrughna, lest Rama should be angry with thee."

Kausalya, mother of Rama, then approached Bharata and said: "The raj is now thine, O ambitious one. Thy mother hath secured it for thee."

Bharata fell at her feet and vowed that he would never sit on the throne, but would hasten after Rama to entreat him to return.

Then Kausalya wept and embraced him because that he was loyal to his elder brother.

When Bharata had performed the funeral rites for the Maharajah, he left Ayodhya with a strong army to search for Rama.

The two brothers met in the jungle of Chitra-kuta,

and they embraced one another and wept for their dead sire.

In the morning Bharata spake to Rama in the presence of the army, saying: "This raj, which was given unto me against my will, I now gift unto thee, mine elder brother. Accept it and remove the stain of my mother's sin."

Said Rama: "O Bharata, my royal sire, fulfilling his vow, banished me to the jungle and appointed thee to the raj. A faithful son cannot recall the mandate of his sire."

Then Java'li, the Brahmanic counsellor of Dasaratha, spake and said: "O Rama, why dim thine understanding with empty maxims? Thou hast already obeyed thy sire. It is foolish to think that thou shouldst continue this allegiance to one who is dead. A man enters the world alone and departs alone; he owns not friendship to kindred. His parents are to him like a wayside inn which he leaves in the morning; his allegiance to them is temporary. He meets them like a traveller who tarries on his journey and then goes on his way as before. In this world we have only one life to live. If thou wilt refuse this raj thou wilt destroy thy one life. I am sorry for those who scorn the blessings of this world so long as they are alive in the hope that they will reach a Paradise which does not exist. When this life is spent we are extinguished for ever. Alas! that men should make to their ancestors useless offerings. Can a dead man eat thereof? These offerings are a waste of food. If the soul endures and passes into a new body how can it benefit from food eaten by another? These practices were invented by cunning priests with selfish motives. . . . There is no Hereafter. Therefore snatch the joys of life while thou canst, O Rama, take the raj which is offered to thee and return to Ayodhya."

Said Rama, whose heart was filled with anger: "O Javali, thy motive is excellent but thy doctrines are false. A good man is distinguished from an evil man by his deeds. How can I, who have embraced a virtuous life, turn now into the path of evildoing? The gods who read a man's heart would curse me for my sins. Vain are thine idle words; thy reasoning is cunning but false. Truth is our ancient path. Truth endures when all else passes away. The venom of falsehood is more deadly than the venom of a serpent's sting. Thou hast said that there is no Hereafter, and that we should snatch pleasures while life endures. If that is so, why do wise men condemn what is evil if the vicious are simply pursuing the quest of happiness? Why do sages live austere lives, eating fruits and roots, instead of feasting on flesh and drinking wine? There would be no sciences if we believed only those things we behold. Inferential proof must be permitted. Is a woman to consider herself a widow when her husband is out of sight? . . . Know, all of ye, that I will be faithful to the mandate of my sire. I will keep my promise which I cannot recall. Let Bharata reign, for I will dwell in the jungle."

Bharata said: "If my sire's wish must be fulfilled, let me remain in the jungle for fourteen years so that Rama may return to Ayodhya."

Said Rama: "Neither Bharata nor I can recall or change the commands of Dasaratha."

Thereafter Bharata gave to Rama a pair of new sandals decked with gold, saying: "Put these upon thy feet and they shall accomplish the good of all."

Rama put on the sandals and then returned them to his brother, who said: "I will live as a devotee for fourteen years with matted hair and in a robe of bark.

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Then Java'li, the Brahmanic counsellor of Dasaratha, spake and said: "O Rama, why dim thine understanding with empty maxims? Thou hast already obeyed thy sire. It is foolish to think that thou shouldst continue this allegiance to one who is dead. A man enters the world alone and departs alone; he owns not friendship to kindred. His parents are to him like a wayside inn which he leaves in the morning; his allegiance to them is temporary. He meets them like a traveller who tarries on his journey and then goes on his way as before. In this world we have only one life to live. If thou wilt refuse this raj thou wilt destroy thy one life. I am sorry for those who scorn the blessings of this world so long as they are alive in the hope that they will reach a Paradise which does not exist. When this life is spent we are extinguished for ever. Alas! that men should make to their ancestors useless offerings. Can a dead man eat thereof? These offerings are a waste of food. If the soul endures and passes into a new body how can it benefit from food eaten by another? These practices were invented by cunning priests with selfish motives. . . . There is no Hereafter. Therefore snatch the joys of life while thou canst, O Rama, take the raj which is offered to thee and return to Ayodhya."

Said Rama, whose heart was filled with anger: "O Javali, thy motive is excellent but thy doctrines are false. A good man is distinguished from an evil man by his deeds. How can I, who have embraced a virtuous life, turn now into the path of evil-doing? The gods who read a man's heart would curse me for my sins. Vain are thine idle words; thy reasoning is cunning but false. Truth is our ancient path. Truth endures when all else passes away. The venom of falsehood is more deadly than the venom of a serpent's sting. Thou hast said that there is no Hereafter, and that we should snatch pleasures while life endures. If that is so, why do wise men condemn what is evil if the vicious are simply pursuing the quest of happiness? Why do sages live austere lives, eating fruits and roots, instead of feasting on flesh and drinking wine? There would be no sciences if we believed only those things we behold. Inferential proof must be permitted. Is a woman to consider herself a widow when her husband is out of sight? . . . Know, all of ye, that I will be faithful to the mandate of my sire. I will keep my promise which I cannot recall. Let Bharata reign, for I will dwell in the jungle."

Bharata said: "If my sire's wish must be fulfilled, let me remain in the jungle for fourteen years so that Rama may return to Ayodhya."

Said Rama: "Neither Bharata nor I can recall or change the commands of Dasaratha."

Thereafter Bharata gave to Rama a pair of new sandals decked with gold, saying: "Put these upon thy feet and they shall accomplish the good of all."

Rama put on the sandals and then returned them to his brother, who said: "I will live in the forest for fourteen years with my bow and arrow in my hand, for my bark."

and they embraced one another and wept for their dead sire.

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"These sandals, O Rama, will be placed upon the throne which I will guard for thee. If thou dost not return when the time of thy penance is ended, I will perish upon the pyre."

The brethren then took leave of one another. Bharata returned to Ayodhya, and to his counsellors spake, saying "I will dwell outside the city in Nandigrama until Rama returns again."

Then he clad himself in bark and went to the jungle. There he conducted the affairs of government, holding the royal umbrella over Rama's sandals. All presents which were given were first presented to the sandals, because Bharata ruled the kingdom for his elder brother. The sandals of Rama were the symbol of royal authority.

Meanwhile Rama with Sita and Lakshmana went southward towards deeper jungles, visiting various holy sages, and having crossed the Vindhya mountains, they wandered together in the Deccan and Southern India. At Panchavati¹, nigh to the sources of the river Godavari, the royal exiles built a hut with four rooms, and lived peaceful and pious lives. Thirteen years and a half went over their heads.

It came to pass that one day there came to the quiet hermitage a Rakshasa woman, named Surpa-nakha, the sister of Ravana, the demon King of Lanka, Ceylon. She was misshapen and ugly and her voice was harsh and unpleasant. When she beheld Rama, who was comely as a lotus, and of lofty and loyal bearing, her heart was filled with love for him. Made bold with this love, she resolved to assume another form so as to induce him to leave the faithful Sita. . . . In time she stood before the prince in the guise of a young and beautiful woman, and said: "Who art thou who hast

¹ Nasik. About 100 miles from Bombay.

come hither with thy bride to dwell in this lone jungle which is haunted by Rakshasas?"

Said Rama: "I am Rama, the elder son of a Maharajah named Dasaratha. I dwell here in exile in fulfilment of my sire's vow, with Sita, my spouse, and Lakshmana, my brother. Why dost thou, O fair one, who art as beautiful as the bride of Vishnu, wander about here all alone?"

Surpa-nakha said: "I am a Rakshasa woman, the sister of Ravana, and have come hither because I love thee. I have chosen thee for my husband, and thou shalt rule over my great empire. Thy Sita is pale and deformed and unworthy of thee, but I am of surpassing beauty and have power to assume any form at will. I must devour Sita and thy brother, so that we may range the jungle together and visit the lofty hills."

Said Rama: "Sita is my beloved bride, nor would I leave her. But Lakshmana hath no consort and is a fit husband for thee."

Surpa-nakha at once departed from Rama, and went and found Lakshmana, who jested with her.

Then the enraged Rakshasa woman sprang towards Sita in jealous anger, but Rama thrust her back. Like to lightning Lakshmana leapt forward with his sword and cut off the ears and nose of the evil-hearted Surpa-nakha, whereat she shrieked and fled away, wailing like to the storm wind. The rocks answered back her awesome cries.

Surpa-nakha hastened to one of her brothers who was named Khara, and when he saw her disfigured and bleeding, he cried: "None but a Celestial could have done this deed. This day will I drink the blood of Indra as a crane drinks milk and water."

Then Surpa-nakha related what had taken place, and

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and slew Dushana and scattered the demon army in flight. Khara sought to avenge his brother's death, but Rama drew his bow and shot a blazing arrow which consumed him instantly. So was the battle won, and Sita came forth from the cave and embraced her heroic husband and kissed him.

Of all the Rakshasa host only Surpa-nakha escaped alive. She hastened to Lanka and informed the ten-headed King Ravana of the death of his brothers, and said: "Thou canst not defeat Rama in battle. But he may be overcome by guile. He hath a beautiful spouse, whose name is Sita, and she is dearer to him than life. If thou wilt take her captive, Rama can be slain, because he is unable to exist without her."

Said Ravana: "I will bring Sita hither in my chariot."

On the morrow Ravana and his brother Maricha, whom Rama had aforetime driven far across the ocean with a Celestial weapon, went towards the hermitage of the royal exiles in a resplendent chariot which went through the air like a great bird; it was drawn by asses which had the heads of Rakshasas.

Maricha assumed the shape of a golden deer with silvern spots; its horns were tipped with sapphire and its eyes were like to blue lotus blooms. This beautiful animal of gentle seeming grazed below the trees until Sita beheld it with wondering eyes as she came forth to pluck wild flowers. She called to Rama, saying: "A deer of wondrous beauty is wandering through the grove. I long to rest at ease on its golden skin."

Said Rama: "O Lakshmana, I must fulfil the desire of Sita. Tarry with her until I obtain this animal for her."

So speaking, he lifted his bow and hastened away through the trees.

said: "Rama and Lakshmana attacked me to protect the woman Sita, whose life-blood I desired to drink. I entreat thee to bring her to me now."

Khara called upon fourteen Rakshasas and commanded them to capture the three royal hermits who dwelt in Dandaka jungle. They hastened away and Surpa-nakha went with them, but soon she returned wailing, because Rama had slain the Rakshasas with Celestial arrows.

Khara immediately called upon his brother Dush'ana, saying: "Assemble an army of fourteen thousand Rakshasas, and bring my weapons and my chariot with white horses, for, verily, this day I must kill the hateful Rama."

Evil were the omens as the army marched to battle. Jackals howled and birds screamed at dawn; the sky was blood-red, and Rahu endeavoured to swallow the sun and caused an awesome eclipse; a headless horror appeared in mid air. The arrows of Rama emitted smoke, and he said to Lakshmana: "Hasten with Sita to a secret cave in the mountains and protect her there. I will battle with the demons alone."

Lakshmana did as his brother commanded. Then Rama girt on his glowing armour, and, armed with a Celestial bow and many arrows, he awaited the coming of his enemies. When the Rakshasas appeared they quailed before him, because he appeared like to Yama at a Yuga end, but Khara drove on in his chariot, urging his followers to attack; they followed him roaring like a tempest, and they appeared like to black tremendous clouds rushing towards the rising sun.

Thousands of weapons were showered against Rama, who began to discharge flaming arrows, which swept among the Rakshasas like fire in a sun-dried forest, so that many were mangled and slain. Still Khara and his brother continued to attack; but Rama seized a great Celestial weapon

Sita wept, and Lakshmana, repenting that he had spoken harshly, said: "I will obey thee and hasten unto Rama. May the spirits of the forest protect thee against hidden enemies. I am troubled because I behold evil omens. When I return, may I behold Rama by thy side."

Said Sita: "If Rama is slain I will die by drowning, or by poison, or else by the noose. I cannot live without Rama."

Ravana kept watch the while, and when he saw Lakshmana leaving the hermitage, he assumed the guise of a forest sage and went towards the lonely and sad-hearted Sita. The jungle had grown silent. Ravana saw that Sita was beautiful as the solitary moon at midnight when it illumines the gloomy forest. He spake, saying: "O woman of golden beauty, O shy one in full bloom, robed in silk and adorned with flowers, art thou Sri, or Gauri,¹ or the goddess of love, or a nymph of the forest? Red as coral are thy lips; thy teeth shine like to jasmine; love dwelleth in thine eyes so soft and lustrous. Slender art thou and tall, with shapely limbs, and a bosom like to ripe fruit. . . . Wherefore, O fair one, with long shining tresses, dost thou linger here in the lonesome jungle? More seemly it were if thou didst adorn a stately palace. Choose thee a royal suitor; be the bride of a king. What god is thy sire, O beautiful one?"

Sita honoured Ravana, believing that he was a Brahman. She told him the story of Rama's exile, and said: "Rest thyself here until the jungle-ranging brethren return to greet thee."

Then Ravana said: "No Brahman am I, but the ruler of the vengeful Rakshasas. I am Ravana, King of Lanka, dreaded by even the gods. Thy beauty, O fair one, clad

¹ Names of the wives of Vishnu and Shiva.

Lakshmana spoke to Sita and said: "My heart is full of misgiving. Sages have told that Rakshasas are wont to assume the forms of deer. Ofttimes have monarchs been waylaid in the forest by artful demons who came to lure them away."

Rama chased the deer a long time hither and thither through the forest, and at length he shot an arrow which pierced its heart. In his agony Maricha sprang out of the deer's body, and cried out in imitation of Rama's voice: "*Sita, Sita, save me! O save me, Lakshmana!*" Then he died, and Rama perceived that he had slain the Rakshasa Maricha, brother of Ravana.

Sita's heart was filled with alarm when she heard the voice of the Rakshasa calling in imitation of her husband. She spake to Lakshmana, saying: "Hasten and help my Rama; he calls for help."

Said Lakshmana: "Do not fear for Rama, O fair one. No Rakshasa can injure him. I must obey his command and remain beside thee. The cry thou hast heard is an illusion wrought by demons."

Sita was wroth; her eyes sparkled and her voice shook as she spake, saying: "Hath thine heart grown callous? Art thou thy brother's enemy? Rama is in peril, and yet thou dost not hasten to succour him. Hast thou followed him to the forest desiring that he should die, so as to obtain his widow by force? If so, thy hope is a delusion, because I will not live one moment after he dies. It is useless, therefore, for thee to tarry here."

Said Lakshmana, whose eyes were filled with tears: "I do not fear for Rama. . . . O Sita! thy words scald me, for thou art as a mother unto me. I cannot answer thee. My heart is free from sin. . . . Alas! that fickle women with poisonous tongues should endeavour to set brother against brother."

Sita wept, and Lakshmana, repenting that he had spoken harshly, said: "I will obey thee and hasten unto Rama. May the spirits of the forest protect thee against hidden enemies. I am troubled because I behold evil omens. When I return, may I behold Rama by thy side."

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greet thee."

Then R^e . . . ruler
of Lanka,
one, clad

in yellow silk, has taken captive my heart. Be my chief queen, O Sita, and five thousand handmaidens will wait upon thee. Share mine empire and my fame."

Said Sita, whose eyes flashed fiery anger: "Knowest thou Rama, the god-like hero who is ever victorious in strife? I am his wedded wife. Knowest thou Rama, the sinless and saintly one, who is strongly armed and full of valour and virtue? I am his wedded wife. What madness hath prompted thee to woo the wife of so mighty a warrior? I follow Rama as a lioness follows a lion. Canst thou, a prowling jackal, hope to obtain a lioness? Snatch from the jaws of a lion the calf which it is devouring, touch the fang of a cobra when it seizeth a fallen victim, or tear up a mountain by the roots, or seize the sun in heaven before thou dost seek to win or capture the wife of Rama, the avenger."

Ravana boasted his prowess, saying: "I have power to slay even Yama. I can torture the sun and shoot arrows through the earth. Little dost thou know of my glory and my heroism."

Then he changed his shape and stood up in gigantic demon form with vast body and ten heads and twenty arms. . . . Seizing Sita, he soared through the air with her as Garuda carries off the queen of serpents; he placed her in his chariot and went away swifter than the wind.

The unseen spirits of the jungle looked on, and they heard the cries of Sita as she called in vain for Rama and Lakshmana. Jatayus¹, Monarch of Vultures, who lay asleep on a mountain top, heard her and awoke; he darted upon Ravana like to the thunderbolt of Indra. A fierce battle was fought in mid air. Jatayus destroyed the chariot and killed the Rakshasa asses, but Ravana

¹ *Prem. Jata'yus.*

took Sita in his arms, and, soaring higher than the Vulture king, disabled him with his sword.

Then Ravana continued his journey towards Lanka, floating in the air. As he passed over the Mountain of Apes, Sita contrived to cast off her ornaments, and they dropped through the air like falling stars. . . . The five apes found them and said: "Ravana is carrying away some beautiful woman who calls upon Rama and Lakshmana."

When Ravana reached his palace he delivered Sita to a band of Rakshasa women, commanding them to guard her by day and by night.

Long and loudly did Rama lament when he returned to the forest hut and found that it was empty. He knew that Sita had been carried away, but whither he knew not.

CHAPTER XXVI

Rama's Mission Fulfilled

Rama Laments for Sita—The King of Vultures—Story of the Demon—Revelation after Death—Rama forms an Alliance with the Apes—Slaying of Bali—The Rainy Season—Sita's Life in Lanka—Hanuman the Spy—Discovery of Sita—Battle with Giants—Building of Rama's Bridge—The Worship of Shiva—Invasion of Lanka—The War with Demons—A Serpent Noose—How the Sleeping Giant was Slain—Rama and Lakshmana Wounded—Hanuman carries a Mountain to Lanka—Lakshmana Slain and Restored to Life—Ravana seeks to kill Sita—The Fall of Ravana—Sita's Ordeal of Fire—Rama's Return to Ayodhya—Second Exile of Sita—The Horse Sacrifice—Rama's Warlike Sons—Sita Returns to the Earth Mother—Ascent of Rama.

RAMA wept for Sita. He searched hither and thither through the forest, and called on every mountain and tree and on every bird and every beast, asking whither she had gone. When he found a tattered garland which his loved one had worn, he swooned with overpowering grief.

Then Lakshmana sprinkled water drops on his face until he revived. "Alas! my brother," he cried, "do not sorrow thus lest death should snatch thee away."

Said Rama: "Sita is my heart's love. I cannot live without her. For my sake she deserted the royal palace to wander in this fearsome jungle. Now that she is gone, the moments seem longer than years. . . . How can I live on when she is lost to me?"

Lakshmana comforted his brother: then they arose together and continued their vain search. . . . Rama

beheld a beauteous lotus in a clear stream, and, blinded with tears, he deemed it was the face of Sita. "O hard-hearted one," he exclaimed, "art thou hiding there among the water blooms? Seekest thou to test my love in this manner? Arise and come to me, my sweet love, nor doubt me any longer."

But the bloom moved not, and Lakshmana led away his grief-distracted brother.

"Mayhap she hath returned to the hut now," Rama cried. Then the brethren hastened to the hermitage, but found it empty as before. . . . Rama wailed in the moonlight and cried to the orb of night: "O moon! mankind welcome thy coolness, but thou dost bring to me naught but sorrow and tears. . . . Thou lookest over the whole world, beholding all living beings. Where, O tell me, where is my beloved one, my lost Sita?"

Rama wandered fitfully through the jungle: the moonbeams and the shadows fluttered around, and it seemed as if the face of Sita were peering from everywhere. So passed a sleepless night, full of mourning and illusions.

On the morrow the brethren went forth again in quest of the lost one. They came to the place where Jatayus lay dying, and that lordly bird spake to Rama and related all that had befallen Sita and himself.

Rama sat on the ground: he embraced the dying Vulture King, and said unto Lakshmana: "Alas! my brother, the noble Jatayus hath given up his life to serve me. I have lost my kingdom and my sire; I have lost Sita, and now our ally, the Rajah of Vultures, is dying. . . . All my friends are passing away. If I were to sit in the shade of a tree, the tree would fall; if I stooped to drink water from a river, verily the river would dry up." . . .

Then he spake to Jatayus, saying: "Whither hath Ravana gone with my well-beloved?"

Said the Vulture: "He went southward towards an unknown forest fastness. . . . Alas! my strength fails, mine eyes grow blind, my life is ebbing from my body."

When he had spoken thus, Jatayus died in Rama's arms, and his soul ascended to the heaven of Vishnu in a chariot of fire.

Thereafter the brethren went towards the south. On their way they met a black demon of monstrous size; his head was in the middle of his body; he had but one eye, and his teeth were numerous and long. Suddenly the misshapen demon stretched out his two great arms, and the brethren fought against the arms.

The demon cried: "Who are ye that dare to combat with me? I welcome ye because I am an hungered this day, and long to feast on human flesh."

Rama and Lakshmana fought on until they cleft both the great arms that were coiled around them, whereat the monster fell upon the ground. Said Rama: "We are Dasaratha's sons, who are exiles in the jungle."

Then the demon revealed that he was Kabandha, and bade them burn his body, so that he might be bereft of his Rakshasa form and nature; thereafter, he promised, he would inform them regarding Sita. The brethren dug a pit and cremated the monster, and from the fire arose Kabandha, the Gandharva, who had been placed under spells. He spake and said: "Ravana dwells in the island of Lanka; he is the King of Rakshasas. If thou wouldst fain overcome him, thou must seek the aid of the ape chief, Sugriva, King of the Vanars, who dwells on Rishyamukha mountain."¹

When the brethren went towards this mountain,

¹ Among the Nilgiri mountains.

Hanuman, son of Vayu, the wind god, a counsellor of the Ape King, came forth to meet them. He conducted Rama and Lakshmana before Sugriva, to whom they related the story of Sita's abduction.

Said Sugriva: "Some days past I beheld a woman who was borne aloft in the arms of a flying Rakshasa; she threw down her ornaments, which we have preserved with care."

Then the ornaments were brought forth, and they were recognized by Lakshmana, but Rama wept so profusely that he knew not whether he gazed upon the jewels of Sita or not.

Sugriva, who was the son of Surya, the sun god, desired to aid Rama, but he told that his bride and his kingdom had been taken from him by his half-brother Bali, son of Indra, whom he feared.¹ Then Rama promised to slay Bali and restore the kingdom to Sugriva. And as he promised so did he do. Sugriva challenged his brother to single combat, and Rama discharged an arrow which pierced the heart of the usurper. All the apes rejoiced greatly when the rightful King of the Vanars was restored to his throne.

The rainy season came on soon afterwards, and Rama and Lakshmana went to dwell upon the mountain Malyavana, where they found a cave.

Slowly passed the days of waiting. Ofttimes did Rama grieve for Sita. He was wont to speak to Lakshmana, saying: "Delightful is the season of rain and tempest unto those who dwell in happy homes in the midst of their families; it is a time of sorrow to those who suffer separation. . . . Behold the great black clouds like to battling elephants leaping and rolling in heaven. Thunder

¹ These apes are the incarnations of the Vedic deities who sojourned on earth according to Vishnu's command.

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Said Sugriva: "Some days past I beheld a woman who was borne aloft in the arms of a flying Rakshasa; she threw down her ornaments, which we have preserved with care."

Then the ornaments were brought forth, and they were recognized by Lakshmana, but Rama wept so profusely that he knew not whether he gazed upon the jewels of Sita or not.

Sugriva, who was the son of Surya, the sun god, desired to aid Rama, but he told that his bride and his kingdom had been taken from him by his half-brother Bali, son of Indra, whom he feared.¹ Then Rama promised to slay Bali and restore the kingdom to Sugriva. And as he promised so did he do. Sugriva challenged his brother to single combat, and Rama discharged an arrow which pierced the heart of the usurper. All the apes rejoiced greatly when the rightful King of the Vanars was restored to his throne.

The rainy season came on soon afterwards, and Rama and Lakshmana went to dwell upon the mountain Malaya, where they found a cave.

Slowly passed the days of waiting. Ofttimes did Rama grieve for Sita. He was wont to speak to Lakshmana, saying: "Delightful is the season of rain and tempest unto those who dwell in happy homes in the midst of their families; it is a time of sorrow to those who suffer separation. . . . Behold the great black clouds like to battling elephants leaping and rolling in heaven. Thunder

¹ These apes are the incarnations of the Vedic deities who sojourned on earth according to Vishnu's command.

roars amidst the mountains. The lightnings flash and sparkle; alas! their golden lustre in the darkness of night reminds me of my lost Sita. . . . Now the wind falls and the earth is bright with rain tears, and I hear the sighing of Sita as she weeps in pain and sorrow. . . . The rainbow comes forth in beauty like to Sita arrayed with jewels and ornaments. . . . Now the earth is refreshed: trees are budding and flowers bloom again in beauty, but I cannot be consoled. Lost is Sita, my dearly beloved; she writhes in the palace of the Rakshasa king as the lightning writhes amidst the black clouds. . . . Ah! I abandoned my throne and kingdom with joy because Sita was with me; now my heart is breaking because she hath been snatched away. . . . See how the shadows gather again; winds roar and rains pour down; as dubious is my future, and dark as is this gloomy day of sorrow. Jatayus hath told that Sita is concealed in a distant fastness. . . . How can I be consoled? I mourn not for myself alone, but chiefly because she whom I love sorrows and suffers in a strange land."

Now, when Sita was dwelling in the palace of the demon king, guarded by Rakshasa women, Ravana approached her again and again, and addressed to her sweet speeches, praising her beauty and endeavouring to win her love. But Sita rejected him with scorn. Although she was his prisoner, he could not win her by force. She was strengthened by her own virtue; she was protected by Brahma's dread decree. Be it known that once upon a time the lustful Ravana had seized by force a nymph of Indra's heaven, whose name was Punjikashthala. When he committed that evil offence, Brahma spake angrily and said that Ravana's head would be rent asunder if ever again he attempted to act in like manner towards another female in heaven or upon earth.

Sita said unto the demon king: "Thou shalt never have me for wife either in this world or in the next. Rather would I die than gratify thy desire."

Angry was Ravana, and he commanded the female Rakshasas to convey Sita to the Asoka grove, believing that her heart would be melted by the beauties of that fair retreat. "Thou wilt provide her with fine raiment," he said, "and with rich ornaments and delicious food, thou wilt praise me before her, and anon threaten her with dire calamity if she refuseth to become my bride."

Sita remembered Rama in her heart by day and by night, and wept and moaned for him, refusing to be comforted.

When the rainy season was drawing to a close, Rama fretted because Sugriva, King of the Vanars, was making no effort to collect his forces and prepare for the recovery of Sita. Instead, he drank wine and spent the days in merriment among his wives. At length Lakshmana visited the palace and threatened Sugriva with death, because he had broken his promise, whereat the monarch summoned speedily his great armies of apes and bears in countless numbers. Four divisions were then sent out to the north and the south, and eastward and westward, to search for Sita.

Success attended the efforts of the army commanded by Hanuman. It chanced that his officers discovered on a mountain summit Sampati, the brother of Jatayus, King of the Vultures. He was wounded and helpless, because his wings had been scorched by endeavouring to soar to the sun so that he might fulfil a vain boast. Although stricken thus, Sampati could still see clearly over vast distances. He had beheld Ravana carrying away Sita across the ocean towards Lanka. This knowledge he communicated through his son to Hanuman. When

he rendered such great service to Rama his wings began to grow, and he was enabled once again to take flight athwart the blue heaven.

Hanuman then resolved to visit the distant island with purpose to discover where Sita had been hidden. Assuming gigantic form, he stood upon a mountain top and leapt seaward. The mountain shook when he sprang from it. Over the sea went the wind god's son and that swiftly. But demons endeavoured to arrest his progress through the air. Surasa, mother of the Nagas, rose up with gaping jaws, and cried: "Thou must needs pass through my mouth ere thou wilt go farther, O Hanuman."

The heroic Ape extended his bulk, but the Naga hag opened wider and wider her jaws to prevent him passing. Then Hanuman shrank to the size of a man's thumb, and leapt into her mouth and out of it again and again so as to fulfil her conditions, whereat the hag owned that she was defeated and allowed him to pass.

Next arose the she dragon, Sinhika, who clutched the shadow of Hanuman and held him back. Wrathfully she sprang forward to devour him, but again the cunning Ape contracted himself, and entering her mouth, attacked her and wounded her so that she was slain.

Leaping from her body, Hanuman resumed his journey until he arrived at Lanka. Night had fallen but the moon shone brightly. He assumed the form of a cat and crept stealthily through the capital, gazing on the wonders about him. He reached the great palace of Ravana and entered therein. It had shining crystal floors and jewelled stairways of gold and silver. The mansion of Indra was not more beautiful than that resplendent palace of the demon king. Hanuman crept on through the women's chamber, and beheld fair forms "subdued in all the shapes of sleep"; beautiful were they as lotus

blooms that await the sun's first kiss ere they open their soft eyelids, or as the lustrous stars on an autumn night gleaming and moving in heaven; it seemed as if a wreath of sweet human blossoms had been thrown carelessly into that perfumed chamber of sleep.

Hanuman wandered on until he reached the Asoka grove. There he beheld the long-lost Sita, the queen of stars. Fierce she demons surrounded her, and some were of fearsome shape; they had dogs' heads and pigs' heads and the faces of horses and buffaloes; some were of great bulk and others were dwarfish; some had but one eye and others had three eyes; the ears of some hung touching the ground; others that were hairy were the *most horrible to behold*.

When morning came Ravana drew nigh to plead his love, praising the beauty of Sita, but she rejected him, as she had oftentimes done before, whereat the demon grew angry and threatened her with dire tortures and even death. . . . Sita was like to a gentle fawn surrounded by wolves. Yet she was without fear. Rather would she perish than be unfaithful to Rama.

Hanuman kept watch, crouching in the branches of a tree, and at length he found it possible to approach her in secret. At first she feared that Ravana had assumed the form of Hanuman to deceive her, but she was reassured when the Vanar spy showed her the ring of Rama, and related how greatly he sorrowed because she had been taken from him. Then was her heart touched with sorrow mingled with joy. Hanuman offered to carry her away, but in her modesty she refused to touch the body of any male being save Rama. She took from her hair a bright jewel which she gave to Hanuman as a token; and she said that Ravana had allowed her but two months to live if she refused to yield to him.

Hanuman desired, ere he left the city of Ravana, to show his enmity against the demons. Assuming his gigantic form, he uprooted trees and destroyed fair mansions. The guards came out against him and he slew many of them. But, at length, the mighty Indrajit, son of Ravana, hastened forth and shot a magic serpent-shaft which enwrapped Hanuman like a noose, and rendered him helpless. Thus was he taken prisoner, and he was dragged before Ravana, who commanded that the Ape be put to death. But a counsellor intervened and advised that Hanuman should be regarded as an envoy, and treated with dishonour ere he was sent back, so that their enemies might be terrified. Ravana consented to this course, and an oil-soaked cloth was tied round the Ape's great tail and set on fire. But Sita prayed that the fire should not injure Hanuman, and her prayer was heard. The son of Vayu suddenly contracted his body so that his bonds fell from him, and he leapt over the city, setting fire with his flaming tail to many mansions, and so accomplishing great destruction. Then he obtained another brief interview with Sita, and once again leapt over the ocean; he hastened with the good tidings of his journey to Rama, who rejoiced greatly that his loved one had been found.

Preparations were at once begun to rescue Sita. The Vanar armies were marched southward, and they camped on the shore over against Lanka, which lies sixty miles from the mainland. Here they were joined by a new and powerful ally.

Be it known that the mighty deeds of Hanuman had stricken terror to the heart of Ravana. The demon king summoned a council of war to consider what should be done. All his warriors advised him to wage war, except Bibhishana, his younger brother, who censured the

monarch for the offence which he had committed against blameless Rama. "Hear my words," he said, "and restore Sita to her rightful lord, or else Rama will swoop down upon thy kingdom, O Ravana, as a falcon who seizeth his prey. Make peace with him now, lest many perish in battle."

Ravana was made angry, and cried: "Alas! for the love of my near relatives, who sorrow at my fame and smile at my peril; they are ever jealous and full of guile, because they hate me in their secret hearts. . . . Evil is thy speech, O Bibishana. Depart from me, false prince, and carry thy treason to our enemies. . . . If thou wert not my brother I would slay thee even now."

Bibishana was thus banished from the Rakshasa kingdom, and he immediately crossed the sea and joined the forces of Rama.

Rama performed sacrifices to propitiate the God of Ocean, so that the Vanar forces might be enabled to pass over to Lanka, but these proved to be unavailing. Then angrily he seized his bow and shot Celestial weapons into the bosom of the deep. The earth and the sea were immediately convulsed, and darkness covered the heavens; lightning flashed and thunder bellowed aloud; the mountains began to break in pieces. Rama next seized a fiery dart and threatened to dry up the waters of the sea.

At that moment the King of Ocean rose serenely above the weltering billows in all his splendour, attended by shining water snakes. He addressed Rama with great reverence, reminding him that according to ancient laws he must remain unfordable, but counselling him the while to seek the aid of the Vanar chief Nala, son of Vishwakarma, the divine artisan, so that a bridge might be constructed to enable the armies to cross the deep. Then

the King of Ocean vanished amidst the waves and the heavens brightened again.

Nala was immediately called upon to give his aid. Assisted by his workmen, this wonderful Vanar, whose body was green, constructed a causeway of rocky islands between the mainland and Lanka (Ceylon), and to this day it is called "Rama's Bridge".¹

Rama meanwhile set up the Linga symbol of the god Shiva, and worshipped it on that holy island which hath since been called Ramisseram.

In five days the strait was spanned. Then Rama mounted on the back of Hanuman, son of the wind god Vayu, and Lakshmana mounted the back of Angada, son of Bali and grandson of Indra, and led the Vanar hosts across the sea. The apes and bears which composed the great attacking army leapt from island to island, shouting: "Victory to Rama!" "Victory to Lakshmana!" "Victory to Sugriva!" Now the apes were of many colours; they were white and black, green and blue, yellow and red and brown. Sugriva shone like silver, Angada resembled a white lotus; Nila, son of Agni, was red, and Hanuman was yellow as pure gold; Sarambha had also a yellow body, and Nala was green, while Darvindhra had a black body, a red face, and a yellow tail. These were all leaders and great warriors of the Vanar host.

The army landed in Lanka unopposed, and encamped on a plain fronting the capital of the Rakshasa king.

The Rakshasas issued forth speedily to attack the apes, and the blowing of horns and beating of drums sounded like to the mighty thunder peals at a Yuga-end. Indrajit was the Rakshasa leader. His followers rode on

¹ Also "Adam's Bridge". The green Celtic fairies are similarly credited with making island chains and long jutting promontories which stretch out from opposite shores of arms of the sea.

elephants and lions, on camels and asses, on hogs and hyenas, and on wolves; they were armed with bows and arrows, maces, spears, tridents, swords, and beams, but some had also magic weapons. Roaring and swaying, they drove forward like to long sea-rollers assaulting the shore.

The gigantic apes wielded trees for clubs and threw great boulders, but some depended on their sword-like nails and their long arrowy teeth. They rushed against the demons, shouting "Rama, Rama!" and soon the plain was covered by heaps of writhing bodies and severed limbs, while rivers of blood streamed across it from between the battling hosts. Rama looked on without fear. He reposed his faith on the apes, for he knew that they were incarnations of the gods.

The apes were driven back until Sugriva flung a great tree, which shattered the chariot of Indrajit. Then the Rakshasa leader and his army took flight.

Indrajit obtained a new chariot by offering up in sacrifice a black goat, and returning to the battlefield with his forces he shot arrows at Rama and Lakshmana. Then he threw a serpent noose, which bound the two brothers so that they were unable to move. Great was their peril, but Vayu, god of wind, sent to their aid the great Celestial bird Garuda, the serpent killer, and the snakes which formed the noose fled from before it, whereat the brethren, who had meantime fallen in a swoon, rose up again. Ravana then came forth, but Rama shot arrows which swept the ten crowns from his ten heads, and he retired in his shame and skulked in the city.

The Rakshasas were in desperate straits and bethought them to awaken Kumbha-karna, the mightiest of all the demons. In former days he had terrorized the Universe; he continually devoured human beings, and had defeated

Indra even, but Brahma intervened and decreed that he would sleep for six months and then awaken for one day only. Each time he awoke he devoured a great meal after which he was again overpowered by slumber.

Thousands of men danced and shouted and blew trumpets beside the great sleeper, but he could not be awakened; elephants were driven over his body, yet he never moved; then beautiful women came and caressed him, and he suddenly opened his eyes and roared like to the sea. His eyes were red with anger, and he cried: "Why have I been awakened before my time?"

The Rakshasas informed Kumbha-karna of the army which surrounded the city, and they brought him much food; greedily he swallowed swine and deer and many human beings and drank rivers of wine. Refreshed, but not yet satisfied, he arose and said: "Where are the apes so that I may devour them?"

He mounted his chariot and went forth to battle. The apes trembled to behold him and fled panic-stricken. . . . Sugriva rallied them quickly, and then they began to fling trees and boulders, but these were all splintered to pieces on the limbs of the giant. He defeated Hanuman, and seized Sugriva and carried him off in his chariot. Thousands of apes were devoured by the mighty Rakshasa.

At length Kumbha-karna went against Rama and a fierce conflict ensued, but in the end Rama discharged flaming arrows and severed his head from his body. The monster staggered backward and fell into the ocean, and great billows arose and tossed angrily in the midst of the swollen deep.

Indrajit thereafter offered up another sacrifice and secured fresh weapons. Rendering himself invisible, he rose high in the air and showered arrows like rain until

Rama and Lakshmana, who were grievously wounded, fell down and pretended to be dead.

When darkness came on, Hanuman and Bibhishana surveyed the battlefield with torches and found that many apes had been wounded and slain. Great was their sorrow, but Sushena, the ape physician, bade Hanuman to hasten to a certain Himalayan mountain to obtain healing herbs. The wind god's son assumed tremendous bulk, and, leaping aloft, went speedily through the air until he reached the place where the herbs grew. He searched for them in vain; then he tore up the mountain, and carrying it in his hand returned again to the battlefield. The physician soon discovered the herbs; then he gave healing to Rama and Lakshmana and the wounded apes, who rose up at once ready and eager to fight as before. Hanuman returned with the mountain and restored it to its place.

When the sun rose, Ravana sent forth young heroes to battle against the apes and bears, but they were all slain. Then Indrajit came to avenge the fallen, but Lakshmana drew his bow and shot an arrow which Indra had given to him. Unerring was his aim, and Indrajit was struck down; his body rolled headless upon the plain.

Ravana lamented for the death of his son, crying: "He was the mightiest of my heroes and the dearest to my heart. All the gods feared him, yet by a mortal was he laid low. . . . O my son, thy widow wails for thee and thy mother weeps in sore distress. Fondly I deemed that when the frailties of old age afflicted me thou wouldst close mine eyelids in death, but youth is taken first and I am left alone to battle against mine enemies."

For a time the mighty demon wept; then he arose in wrath to wreak vengeance. First of all he hastened towards the Asoka grove to slay Sita. But the Rakshasa

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did not even visit the wife of Rama, and prevailed upon Rama not to pollute his line by slaying a woman. One came to him: "Auspicious is the last day of the warring men. The hour of thy vengeance is nigh. Turn thee toward the battlefield and great glory will be thine."

Ravana went gloriously away; he mounted his chariot to battle against his enemies, remembering those who had already fallen. Followed by a great army, he swept from the city like to a tempest cloud which darkens the summer heaven. He beheld his brother Ebbishana fighting for Rama, and angrily cast at him a great weapon, but Lakshmana flung a javelin which shattered it in flight. Ravana smiled grimly and shouted to Lakshmana: "Slayer of my son, I welcome thee! Thou hast protected Ebbishana, now protect, if thou canst, thine own self."

Having spoken thus he flung a great dart, which pierced the heart of Lakshmana and pinned him to the earth.

Rama stooped over the fallen hero and cried: "Alart thou fallen, my gallant brother? Thy weapons have dropped from thy hands; death claims thee, but, Lakshmana, thou wilt not die alone. I am weary of battle and of glory, and when my task is ended, I will follow in thy footsteps. . . . The love of wife or friend is easily won, but the love of a faithful brother, equal to thee, is rarely found in this world of illusions. . . . Dearest of brothers, greatest of heroes, wilt thou now awaken from thy deathly swoon or open again thine eyes to behold me? . . . Alas! the lips of Lakshmana are silent and his ears are stopped."

In the darkness of night Hanuman again hastened northward in speedy flight to obtain the mountain which he had aforetime carried to Lanka. The physician found

upon it the healing herbs; he pounded them and made a paste which he placed under the nostrils of the unconscious warrior. Then Lakshmana rose up again healed and hale and powerful. Rama rejoiced greatly, and turned against his foes. . . . A night attack was made upon the Rakshasa capital, and the Apes intercepted a sacrifice which Ravana sought to offer up to the gods so as to compel their aid; many fair mansions were given to the flames.

When day came Ravana went forth to battle. Surpanakha, his sister who had caused the war, stood in his way, and he thrust her aside impatiently, whereat she cursed him, saying: "For this thou wilt never again return to the city."

Ravana drove on in battle fury, his heart filled with hatred for his foes and with sorrow for the fallen. Rama went against him in the chariot of Indra, and for a time a dubious conflict was waged. The earth trembled and the ocean shook with fear.

Suddenly Rama darted forward. He drew his bow and shot a swift arrow, which smote off one of Ravana's ten heads, but immediately another appeared in its place.¹ Then the hero seized the flaming weapon which Brahma had created for the protection of the gods; with unerring aim he discharged it in flaming splendour; it struck the demon; it cleft in twain his heart of iron. Roaring in his fierce agony Ravana fell ponderously upon the plain and immediately expired. So was the enemy of gods and men put to death by peerless Rama.

Celestial music was heard in heaven and flowers fell upon the plain of victory: a voice came down the wind, saying: "*O victor of truth and righteousness, thy task is now ended.*"

¹ Like Hydra against which Hercules fought.

The Rakshasa hosts broke in flight when Ravana fell, and Rama entered the city in triumph. Bibhishana burned the body of his fallen brother, and performed the funeral rites. Thereafter he was proclaimed King of Lanka.

When peace was restored, Rama commanded that Sita should be brought forth. She was carried towards the plain concealed in a litter, and all the Apes gathered round to behold her, whereat Rama requested her to alight and walk towards him, and she did so. With folded hands she approached her husband and knelt at his feet, weeping tears of joy.

Clouded was the brow of Rama; he spoke sternly, and said: "Mine enemies are slain, and thou art delivered from captivity, O Sita; but now that my shame is removed I have no desire to behold thee. I cannot receive thee as my wife, because that thou hast dwelt in the house of Ravana."

Said Sita: "Chaste and innocent have I remained. . . . O Rama, if thou hadst informed me of thy doubt, I would have died ere now. Better is death than thy dark suspicion."

Addressing Lakshmana, she then said: "Build for me a funeral pyre so that I may end my grief amidst the flames."

As she desired so did the brother of Rama do. He built the pyre and set it alight. Then Sita invoked Agni:

If in act and thought, she uttered, I am true unto my name,
Witness of our sins and virtues, may this fire protect my fame!

If a false and lying scandal brings a faithful woman shame,
Witness of our sins and virtues, may this fire protect my
fame!





If in lifelong loving duty I am free from sin and blame,
Witness of our sins and virtues, may this fire protect my fame!
R. G. Dutt's trans.

Fearlessly she then leapt amidst the flames and vanished, while all lamented around her. Rama cried: "This day have I sinned, because she is innocent."

In that hour a great wonder was wrought. Suddenly the Deva-rishis and Gandharvas and the gods appeared in the air. At the same time the red flames of the mighty pyre were divided, and the god Agni came forth with Sita, whom he delivered to Rama, saying: "*Receive thy wife who is without sin or shame.*"

Rama embraced Sita, and said: "I have never doubted her virtue; she is without sin, and now her purity has been proved before all men."

He wept, and Sita hid her face in his bosom and soft embrace.

The exile of Rama was now ended, and he returned speedily in the car of Indra to Ayodhya, with Sita and Lakshmana and Hanuman.

Bharata welcomed his elder brother, and laid the sandals at his feet, saying: "These are the symbols of thy rule, O Rama; I have guarded the throne for thee. Now take thy crown and govern thy kingdom. I give thee back thine own."

Rama was crowned on the morrow amidst the rejoicings of the people, and prosperity returned once again to the kingdom.

Time went past, but the sorrows of Sita were not ended. The people whispered against the fair queen, doubting her virtue, because that she had been taken away by Ravana, and they wondered Rama had received her back. At length her husband, yielding to the wishes

of his authority, but that the impostor queen from the kingdom. The spirit of the forest said: "Let her go, for she is the mother of my people, and I intend her right to the hermitage of Valmiki, counselling her with tears to take refuge with the truly good."

Valmiki comforted her with pity, and soon afterwards the great North as two sons, who were named Lava and Kusa.

Seven years went past, and Rama's mind was troubled because that he had slain Ravana, who was the son of Pulastya, the Rishi. So he resolved to perform the Atmanirrita (holy sacrifice) to cleanse his soul of sin.

The horse was sent forth to wander through the land, and when it approached the hermitage of Valmiki, Lava and Kusa, the sons of Rama and Sita, took possession of it. They defeated the royal army and wounded Satrugha. Lakshmana hastened forth with another army, but he was also grievously wounded and defeated by the young heroes. Then Rama himself went southward to wage war and to capture the horse. When his sons came forth against him, Rama wondered to find that they were so like to himself in countenance and bearing; his heart was filled with tenderness, and he asked them: "Whose children are you?"

Lava and Kusa greeted him with reverence, and said: "Sita is our mother, but we know not the name of our sire."

Then Rama perceived that the lads were his own sons. . . . Valmiki, the sage, came towards him, and Rama said: "The people spoke evil things against Sita, and it was necessary to prove her innocence. Now let her be taken into my presence, for I know that these noble children are mine."

Valmiki returned to Sita and asked her to go with

him before Rama, but for a time she refused to do so. The sage pleaded with her, and at length she walked forth from the hermitage with downcast eyes and hands uplifted. In the presence of Rama and the people she then invoked the Earth, and cried:

If unstained in thought and action I have lived from day of
birth,
Spare a daughter's shame and anguish and receive her, Mother
Earth!

If in duty and devotion I have laboured undefiled,
Mother Earth! who bore this woman, once again receive thy
child!

If in truth unto my husband I have proved a faithful wife,
Mother Earth! relieve thy Sita from the burden of this life!

R. C. Dutt's trans.

When she had spoken thus, all who heard her wept and sorrowed. And while they gazed upon her with pity and tenderness, the earth suddenly yawned, and from its depths arose a golden throne sparkling with gems and supported by four great serpents, as a rose is supported by green leaves. Then the Earth Mother appeared and hailed Sita with loving words, and led her to the throne, on which she seated herself beside her sinless daughter, the faithful and undefiled wife of Rama. . . . The throne thereafter vanished and the earth closed over it.

So passed Sita from before the eyes of all mankind. Rama flung himself upon the ground in an agony of sorrow. But Brahma appeared and spake to him, saying: "Why dost thou despair, O Lord of all? Well thou knowest that life is but a dream, a bubble of water. . . ."

Rama, however, even after the Aswamedha had been performed, continued to mourn until the Celestial bird

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INDIAN MYTH AND LEGEND

[illegible][illegible]

(Type of *Stalida* n. sp.
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 11.
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